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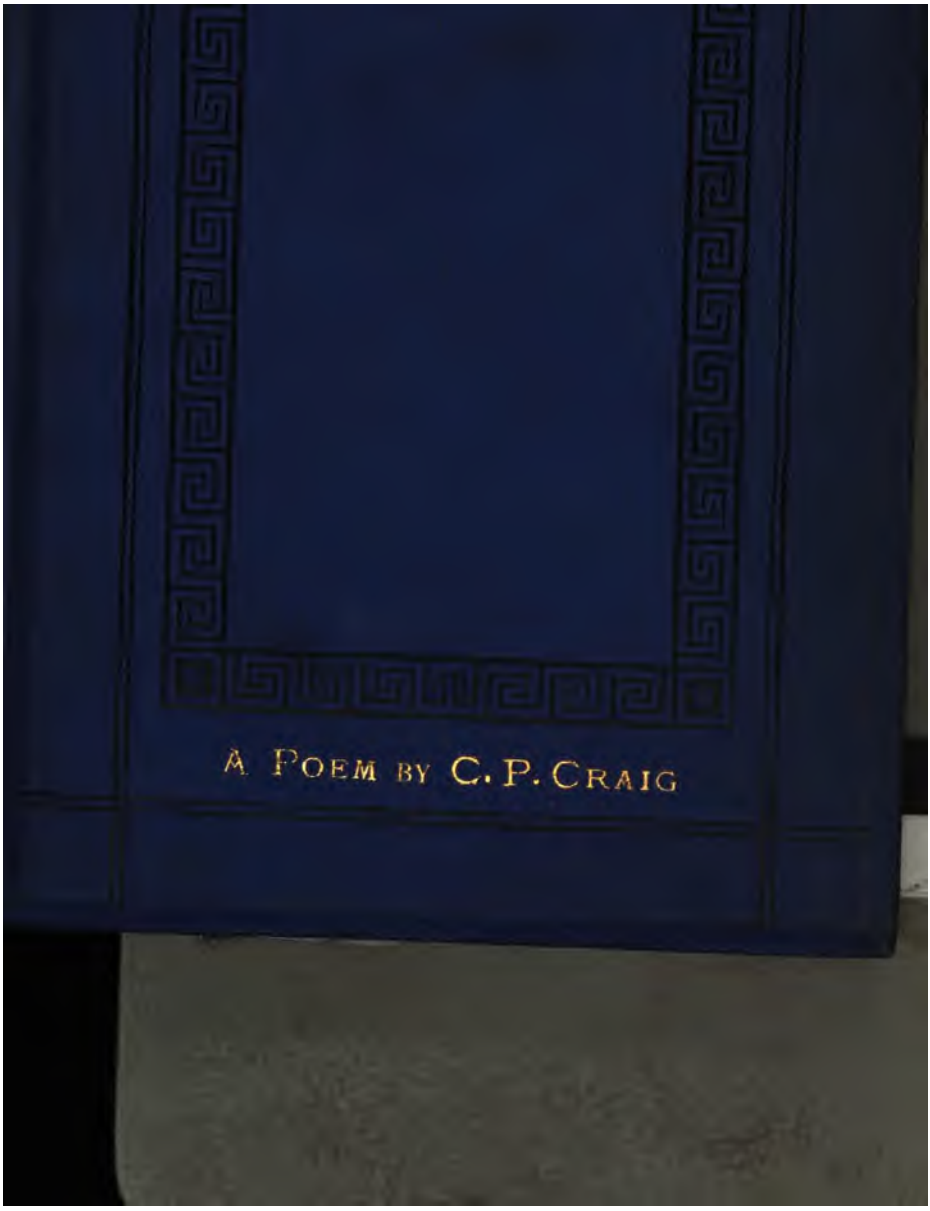
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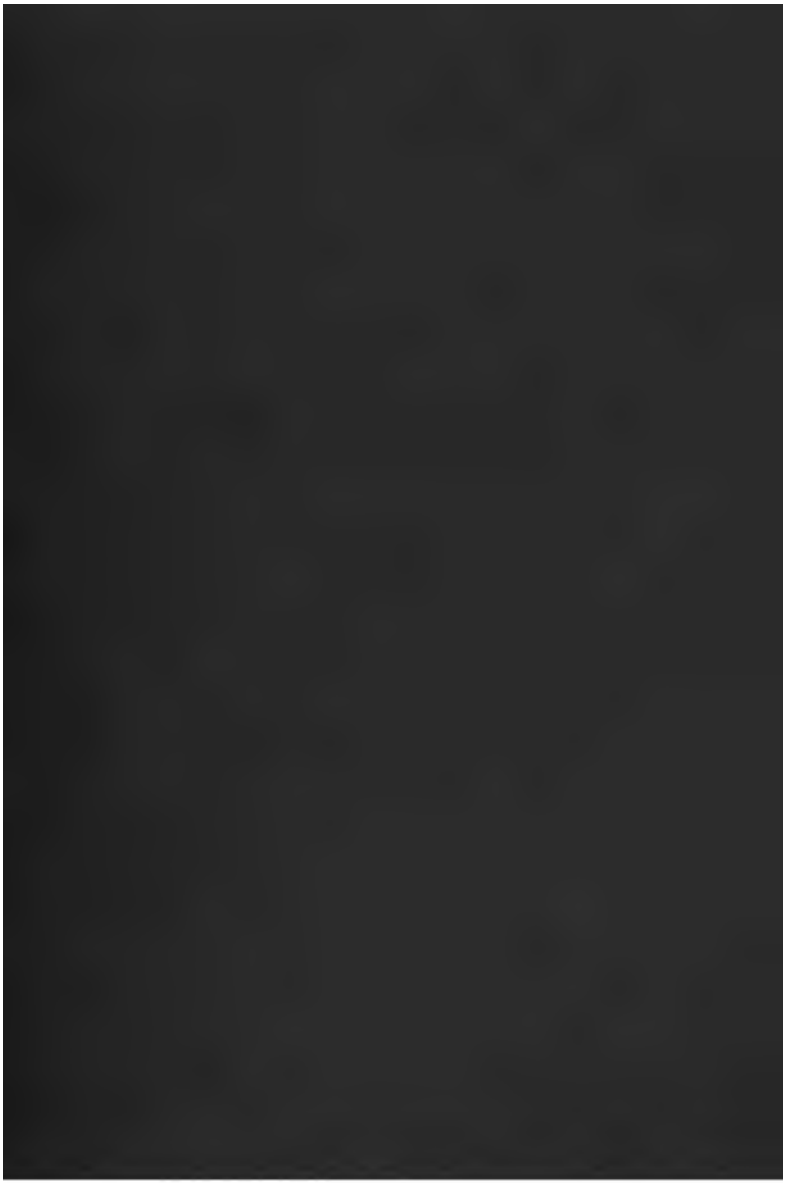

MARY, THE MOTHER OF JESUS.

MARY, THE MOTHER OF JESUS.

A Poem.

BY

CATHARINE PRINGLE CRAIG.

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Mary, the Mother of Jesus.

Scene I.—In the house of Zacharias.

Mary, *and her Cousin* Elisabeth.

ELISABETH.

Why so faint-hearted, so depressed and sad?
Hast thou so soon forgot thy lofty song,
So rich in holy joy, so jubilant
In faith's deep trust, love's proud humility,
When all thy woman's heart was stirred to praise,
And in devoutest reverence thou didst own
The love which chose thee in thy lowliness,
And raised thee to a place of honour high
Above all human thought, so that thy name
Blessed among women ever shall remain?
Hast thou forgot the joy which moved thee then
When Israel's glory, by thy Child restored,

The bliss of generations yet unborn
By His strange birth secured, almost did seem
To overpower in thee the natural sense
Of personal delight in motherhood,
Cherished so fondly as the time draws near,
When in our face the unconscious babe shall smile,
And greetings fond break from the father's lips?

MARY.

Break from the father's lips! What mortal voice
With such a greeting can salute my Child?
My Son, whose coming I no more can hide!
That great and mighty Lord, whose glorious reign,
Proclaimed so oft in prophecy and song,
Has filled with beauty all my earthly dreams:
That King, whose promised advent long denied,
Now in Love's power Divine fulfilled in me,
Thrills all my being with rapturous delight,
With fond desire, and love unutterable.
And yet from this deep joy strange sorrow springs.
Thou knowest of my betrothment lately held
With Joseph, son of Jacob; like ourselves

Sprung from the royal line of Judah's kings.
Long had my youthful heart his love returned
With sweet affection, growing year by year
In happy friendship, kind companionship,
And mutual trust, to our glad bridal day.
A few short months, and sacred marriage rites
Should have secured me from all word of blame,
And underneath the shelter of his roof
Given me a wife's unquestioned claim to hold
A mother's sacred joy. Now bitter tongues
Are busy with my fame. My sisters mock
With harsh and scornful words my weak deceit.
My brother, in his pride of righteous zeal,
Rebukes with all the terrors of the law,
And mutters prayers that more like curses sound;
Threatening me with the dreadful holy wrath
Of Great Jehovah, to confess my shame.
And I—I have not sinned! I dare not speak
The words he bids me. I have told the truth!
And I am scorned as one who wilfully
Covers a falsehood with most impious fraud.
O cousin, hard it seems, and yet my heart

Tells me there is more sinful pride of place
Moving their anger, than the pure desire
Of honouring God, or working good for me;
Affection makes excuse, and tries to find
The loved one blameless, when the world reviles.

ELISABETH.

And how does Joseph act? Is he, too, changed?
Knowing this mystery, does he hold thee true?

MARY.

He knows, and in his sternness pitying still
What he accounts my youthful errors, minds
To break our bond, yet privately, so that
The punishment to me so justly due
For this dark sin—he doubts not of my guilt—
Fall not in harsher sentence on my head.
I have not seen him: by my sisters warned,
He comes not nigh our dwelling since the day,
When in my wondering joy I told the news
Of heavenly blessing by the angel brought,
And of my share in Israel's hope fulfilled.

ELISABETH.

Thy sisters know the promise to our race.
Count they not on the honour to themselves
That thou are chosen mother to the Christ ?

MARY.

They will not heed my words. Too strange to them
My story of the Angel's message seems.
And I to them am such a simple maid,
So all unworthy of a place so high,
The very thought seems to have changed their hearts
To cold unloving scorn, and judgment hard.
Could I invent so wonderful a tale ?
Or is it all a dream, or fancy wild ?
Even my own faith grows faint beneath such blame
From all my kindred ; so to thee I came,
For thou wert ever kind when on my heart
A child's light troubles pressed too heavily ;
And no fond mother's hand was near to guide
My feeble steps along the paths of peace :
Her place, even then, by sisters coldly filled.
The angel also named thee and thy Child,

As sign to me that he was sent of God.
Tell me, how shall I bear it to the end?
Where turn for shelter?

ELISABETH.

Do not fear, my cousin!
All shall be well: thou wilt not be forsaken;
I cannot grasp all that thy tale imports,
Yet I believe. God's power to me revealed
In miracle, and sign so clearly shown
Upon my husband, quells each rising doubt.
Thee mother of the promised Christ I hail!
And bow in reverence to the Love Divine
Which chose thee to such honour. All these years
How dearly has the fond desire been nursed
By every woman's heart throughout our land!
Each mother, singing softly to her babe,
Has hoped the beauty of its infant form,
Fairest of all to her, marked something more
Than mortal in the boy. While those like me,
Unblessed in early wedlock, mourned the lot
That left us hopeless of this high renown,

More than our silent homes. The prophet's words
Proclaiming Him a virgin mother's Child,
Mysterious, we interpreted to mean
Only the first-born in some father's house.
But now thy words in heavenly light reveal
A higher parentage. Canst thou forget
The holy gladness of that sacred hour?
Will not its joy sustain thee in all trial?
Why should the faith which gave thee strength to bear
The presence of the Great Unseen, grow faint
Before the feeble strife of mortal tongues,
Thou blessèd among women!

MARY.

With reverent awe
I that mysterious hour of bliss recall,
When mortal by Immortal Glory shadowed,
In spiritual essence strangely interfused
Through all my being, the communion shared
(As oft before in holy worship sweet)
With Great Jehovah, suddenly became

A germ of life material, growing now
Through these past weeks, and waking in my soul
A mother's holy instinct. Yet too soon
The earthly daily cares press, crowding in,
And my poor woman's heart its weakness owns
When scornful fingers point; and all alone—
No trusting friend to lean on, no strong arm
Of husband proud to shield me—all alone
I bear the shame of unwed motherhood.
A maiden of our royal house unchaste!
A Jewish virgin to her vows untrue!
I, who so earnestly through all these years
Have tried to keep me pure and free from sin—
My happy thoughts subdued to such calm flow
As earthly passion powerless seemed to move.
How hard it is to hear the unholy name
They cast upon me! Though it cannot stain
My innocence, deeply it wounds my heart.
Two spirits seem at war within my breast:
One heavenly, strong in peace and holy trust,
Turning my thoughts to praise devout and pure,
Making me humble by the very sheen

Of the unseen Glory waiting on my Child,
On whose blessed head the crown of all the joys
Of time, and of eternity, shall rest;
The other earthly, dark, and full of gloom,
Stirring strange passionate anger, sorrow, pride,
Against those whom I dearly loved before:
The sting of their harsh words, so undeserved,
Wounding me till I tremble with the pain
Of a hot fever that is almost hate,
And helpless o'er my loveless future wail.
What means this mystery? to such honour raised,
Yet with such trial mixed?

ELISABETH.

'Tis ever so.
Our mortal being unable is to bear
The ineffable glory of immortal joy
With Godhead shared. The faint reflection seen
On Moses' brow, when from the mount he came,
Struck all the people's hearts with awe and fear
As they looked on him. Can thy woman's heart,
With all its heaven-born strength, uprise above

It's human weakness to sustain the light
Of the spiritual radiance in a cloudless calm
Of changeless bliss? Thou art but mortal still,
And must thy lot so bear. Thy Child Divine
Shall from thy human nature feed the life
Material; taking on Himself the form
Of man, that He may learn our needs, may share
The creature's lot, and glorify the path
Of love and duty. Did not trial bind
Thee down to earth, thy spirit rapt might soar
Through its fair fleshly walls and seek the skies.
Mary, be comforted, God knows thee pure
From stain in this, and has marked out the path
Thy feet must tread. To Him commit thy ways.

MARY.

But I am left so helpless. In our home,
My sisters mocked me with such taunting words,
That I was driven, despairing of relief,
Almost to wish that in my mother's tomb
I shared her dreamless rest. My brother's wrath
Has driven me from the dwellings of my friends;

I have no more a home. My very bread
I eat from strangers' hands. Since Joseph heard
Of my Child's coming, he is cold and stern,
And shuns me like some vile unholy thing;
Yet, were he kind, it were but deeper grief;
For now how could I ever bear the touch
Of man's embrace? how claim by marriage right
Shelter from him? Such peaceful, happy days,
As thou beneath thy husband's roof enjoyest,
May ne'er be mine. Perchance the end is near,
And my Child's birth brings death to set me free
From earth's sad toil and sorrow. All is dark;
And woman's natural weakness feeds the gloom.

ELISABETH.

Nay, Mary; let not fancies morbid paint
Thy future with such colours, day by day,
Our help comes with our need. God sent thee here,
And thou canst surely trust my love and care.
On me an honour, second but to thine,
God has bestowed. My child, the forerunner
Of the Messiah, comes. We share one hope,

To near fruition nursed. While others watch,
In weariness of heart, the darkening night
O'er Israel fallen, we rejoice and sing
Because the Dayspring from on high has dawned.
Here thou mayest stay secure in kindred love;
I and my husband will thy guardians be,
And joy to welcome to our humble home
Thy Child, our King, by prophets long foretold,
By poets sung—great David's royal Son.
Soon shall our land rejoice; by Him restored
Our ancient glory; Israel's chosen race
To reign once more; to Judah's royal house
The throne and sceptre; to Jerusalem
The temple worship, sacred, pure, and free.
Her priests all righteous; all her sons—redeemed
From earthly vain desires and sordid aims—
A holy nation; we shall grow in power,
Conquering and to conquer, till the world,
In its utmost bounds, own our Messiah King;
While we, Jehovah's ransomed people, raise
The anthem of creation's highest praise.

SCENE II.—IN THE HOUSE OF ZACHARIAS.

ELISABETH, *Mary's Cousin;* JOSEPH, *her Betrothed Husband.*

ELISABETH.

Why art thou here? Upon what errand come?
Since thou hast fixed to break thy marriage bond
With our young cousin, Mary, to my house
I cannot give thee welcome.

JOSEPH.

She is here!
Tell me, Elisabeth, she is safe with thee?
I only know she left her home in haste,
Vexed, as I guess, by harsh, unkindly words.
Her sisters would not tell me where she went,
If that they knew or cared. They are too hard.

ELISABETH.

And thou! what right hast thou to seek her now,
Since thy betrothal but short time has passed,
And thou its sacred vows hast so forgot,

That dim suspicion, jealous fears awaking,
Has changed thy purpose,—leaving her to bear
Harsh blame and bitter words from friend and foe :
A wife of youth refused, a maiden scorned ?

JOSEPH.

Nay, blame me not, Elisabeth ; thou knowest
How highly prized by all the royal line
Of Judah's tribe is our pure, stainless birth ;
No child of sin must in our families mix,
That so Messiah, promised of our seed,
In virtue and in honour may be born.
Thy cousin Mary, known of pure descent
From David's house,—a maiden young and fair,—
Long had I known and watched with fondest hope
That I might win her love, yet doubting heard
The words of joy that made my bliss complete.
She wore her beauty with such gentle grace
As if this were a fitting veil to hide
The light of the sweet spirit shrined within,
Which looked upon the earth with sunny eyes
That ever shone with heavenly peace and joy.

With modest look and saintly air devout,
She moved among the sadder forms of earth,
As if her very presence were a psalm
Of praise and blessing, written by His hand
Who makes all beauty holy by His love.
I loved her with such reverence as is due
To woman in such fair perfection formed,
When holiness and virtue crown her charms
With diadem above all rubies' price.
Since our betrothal but short time had passed;
Yet each new day's calm happiness grew deep
Into my life, weaving sweet ties which bound
Me ever closer to my promised bride
In strong affection. So, all unprepared
I met the shock, when by her sisters warned
Of secret sin the fruit would soon appear;
I, stricken by the blow, could not restrain
From angry words and thoughts of deepest hate
Against the cruel guile that mocked my trust.
Yet true affection conquered sense of wrong
So hard to bear, and I at last resolved
To free her from her sacred vows to me,—

Calmly to part from her, yet privately,
And raising no accusing voice to claim
A heavier sentence on her guilty head.
Her kinsfolk with approval heard my words,
Nor offered for their sister any plea
Her to excuse, nor ever breathed to me
The wondrous story Mary had revealed:
(They are too wise to trust an angel's words).
But yesternight, when sleep mine eyelids sealed,
A heavenly vision mingled with my dreams;
And from a holy angel-messenger
I heard a tale so strange that thrilled my soul
With rapture new and self-upbraidings deep,
That I, of one so pure such thoughts had nursed;—
Mary, my bride, to holiest honour raised;
Her Child—no son by mortal father owned—
Son of the Highest, our Emanuel comes:
So is the ancient prophecy fulfilled,
That of a virgin-mother Christ is born.
This mystery I seek not to unveil.
So Mary guileless to my love remains;
Nor with less plainness was my place assigned

As earthly guardian of this Child Divine.
His name, the angel told, must JESUS be,—
As Saviour of the people from all sin.
My wife in name must, Mary, in our home,
Press to her breast this Babe of Israel's hope ;
Our further duty coming years will show :
I am content to honour and obey
Our great Jehovah's word of high command,
Nor question, of His love and blessing sure.
My sister's careful hand will all prepare ;
And for a time Susanna will remain
To give to Mary loving service meet.
Now I am come to seek her, doubting not
That, when she left her sister's house, she came
To seek from thee shelter and needed care.
I see the answer shining in thine eyes.
Thou, too, hast heard the tidings of great joy,
The promise long withheld at last fulfilled,
The advent of our King so near proclaimed.
Our bondage o'er, our nation, so despised,
Oppressed, and scorned, to honour now shall rise,
And Gentile tribes fall conquered at our feet.

Tell me if still thou questionest my right
To seek my bride?

ELISABETH.

Joseph, I doubt no more;
For all thy words find echo in my heart,
Confirmed to me by miracle and sign;
Experience giving strength to humble faith,
As God's sure promise grows to perfect work.
Yet seems it better Mary here should stay
Till the set time of marriage nearer comes.
Three times the changing moon must wax and wane
Amid the starry splendours of the sky,
Before the appointed day; nor were it well
For thee to show by an untimely haste
A wish to claim thy right. She goes no more
Back to her brother's house; so we who hold
The secret of this strange and holy birth
Must guard her from temptation's subtle blight,
Lest haply, in her weakness, overborne
By reasonings harsh and cruel unbelief,
Her spirit, crushed, lose the sweet trust of faith.

Even now, the light of the immortal joy,
The inward presence of Divinity,
The touch of God still resting on her heart,
Have shaken the frail human soul from all
Its earthly ties, and tremblingly she weeps
In heavenly gladness rapt, or stricken sore
In mortal anguish. Like a harp whose strings
Vibrate each zephyr's breath, the holy soul
Comes from Jehovah's awful presence forth,
And the cold winds of earth strike deadly chill.
New strength will come as passing days reveal
The holy message true, the vision proved
In all its sacred mystery Divine.

JOSEPH.

Thou sayest well I own the kindly thought,
The wisdom of thy words, and give consent.
Well do I know a tender woman's care
Is fittest now to soothe and comfort her;
And in my house my presence might disturb
The sacred calm that soon may fill her heart,
As, waiting for the Christ, she will prepare

Fair garments for her Babe with willing hand.
But tell her of the angel's charge to me,
And how with glad content I lay aside
All my hard thoughts and jealous, angry fears;
Sweet confidence restored, rejoicing wait
To welcome her, and yield her honoured place
As truest wife by loving husband held,—
His home's best treasure, God's most blessèd gift
Of earthly good on fallen man bestowed.
No more shall scornful whispers vex her ear:
Her Child shall underneath my lowly roof,
As dearest first-born son, find welcome proud,
And I shall share the honour and the joy
Of waiting on the infant Saviour King.
We will our treasure guard and fitly tend,
Watching for every sign of God-like power,
And reading all by ancient prophets told
Of the Messiah's reign; so shall we rise
To truer knowledge of our wondrous Guest.

SCENE III.—IN A HOUSE OF THE PRIESTS, IN JERUSALEM.

MARY *and her Cousin* ELISABETH.

MARY.

Elisabeth, how glad I am to meet
Thee in the holy city once again!
How hast thou journeyed from thy distant home?
We missed thee on the way, and scarcely hoped
To find thee waiting here. When camest thou?
Hast thou found fitting lodging with thy friends?
John met me at the gates, and hurriedly
Gave me thy message, but no questions staid.

ELISABETH.

I came with John; he likes not company,
And ever hastes when duty leads him on;
So here three days ago we have arrived.
Abia's sons hold now in order meet
Their course of service in the temple courts,
And we our place found ready in the house

Set for the families of the priests who come
From other parts to worship at the feast.
My husband's rank this right for me secures.

MARY.

I longed so eagerly to see thy face!
How strange it seems that we have never met
In all these years!

ELISABETH.

'Tis not so long ago
Since thou and I together converse held;
Ten years is not so large a span of life,—
A title-page in an unfinished tale.

MARY.

Ten years! 'Tis more than twelve. Think of thy son;
He was not born, and now he looks a man:
So tall and strong, so steady, grave, and wise.
Thy own white hairs, and feeble, trembling steps,
Make my eyes fill with tears, so great the change!

ELISABETH.

Have we not met since then? I had forgot
In this first greeting. Now I look on thee,
Thy calm fair brow and stately matron air
Tell me of change years only could have wrought,
And I remember that I must be old.
The wingèd moments pass so swiftly on,
And weeks and months to numbered years increase
So silently, we scarcely mark their flight,
Till, startled by a well known voice, whose tones
Have mingled in some sacred, holy song,
In happy chant of earthly gladness joined,
Or sorrow's mournful wail, then died away
In the dim silence of divided lives.
Mary, my cousin, the longer that I watch
Thy face, the harder seems it to believe
Thou art the same sweet maiden, blushing fair,
Yet conscious of the mother's dawning joy,
Who left my home nigh thirteen years ago
As Joseph's bride; and yet your voice recalls
All those strange hours of gladness when we shared
The heavenly secret of thy son's high birth

And parentage Divine; when my own John
Was yet unborn, and on his father's lips
The seal of silence lay, a sign of blessing
To our long childless years. Welcome, dear cousin;
To my lone widowed heart thou bringest hope.
Oft have I pondered deeply of thy life:
Its sacred honour and its lowly joy,
And sighed, yet still in vain, to see thy Boy.
He is not with thee?

MARY.

Now I am alone;
I thought it best, and I so yearned to talk
With thee of all those passing years have brought.
It seems so short and yet so long ago
Since in that troubled hour, so bright, so dark,
To thee for comfort and advice I came
And found thy love so kind, thy words so wise;
Strange seems it now that I should be so moved
With trifles, when I held so sure a joy.
And yet, had it been otherwise, my heart
Might have grown proud, and claimed for worth in me

This honour by God's grace on me bestowed,
Not for my merit but His exceeding love,
To exalt the gift and prove His Son Divine,
More by the human mother's lowliness.
Things then so dark look now so clear and plain,
As I have learned the holiness of life
By learning daily lessons of the need
For heavenly strength to meet each little cross
With meekness and submission, so to grow
To perfectness—not by one act of faith,
But step by step, led by the Father's hand,
Still trusting when we cannot see the end.
Now would I hear of thy son's life and hopes.
We of thy husband's death were duly told
When from the feast that year our friends returned,
And grieved with thee, although we could not come
To sit with other mourners by thy side;
His sickness was but short, nor vexed with pain
The golden evening of his peaceful days?

ELISABETH.

No, he went home; crowning a busy life

With calm and holy death. I scarcely grieved;
It was so like a sleep to see him lie,
With tired hands folded, in such deep repose:
The furrows on his brow grown smooth and fair,
In pride of manhood's prime he seemed to smile,
With shadows of immortal beauty falling
Like sunset on the spirit's vacant home.
I wait in hope, missing his presence sore,
Yet patient, knowing that the years are few
On earth now left me. I shall share his rest.
And John is good, thoughtful beyond his years,
And kind as his stern nature gives him leave
To show the deep affection of his heart.

MARY.

Will John for temple service soon prepare,
Or are his thoughts to other duties turned?

ELISABETH.

I cannot tell; he gives no confidence.
We are not all run in one common mould,
And I blame not my silent, moody lad

That e'en from me his purpose he conceals
If yet his mind on any path is fixed.
Oft to the desert will he wander out,
Restless and sad, returning with new power
Of outward calm to labour as before;
Yet never word he speaks, nor tells the grief
That wraps his soul in gloom. He seems to wait,
Like an ambassador in distant lands,
The orders of his king; nor counsel seeks
From any friend lest he betray the trust
To his own care confided.

MARY.

Me he shuns,
Or seems to shun. Last year in Nazareth
He spent three days, yet never in our home
Sought speech of me. Perhaps he fears my wish,
Travelling too fast, would seek too curiously
To press into his yet unformed designs.
The angel's message named him first to lead
The triumph of Messiah's glorious day,
Making the wondering people to receive

Their King who comes on David's throne to reign.
This wondrous King I know is my own Son;
Yet strangely does the earthly overpower
The heavenly in our sinful human hearts.
In these long years the calm domestic peace,
The ceaseless round of simple daily toil,
And homely duties claiming careful thought,
For child and husband, like a golden cloud
Veiling the sunlight, almost seem to part
Me from the holy raptures of my youth,
Which now this meeting like a dream recalls.

ELISABETH.

Ah! those past years! How slow their march has been,
Measured by the fond longing of desire,
The hope deferred that wasteth the sick heart!
How long it seems till our lost tribes return,
And Israel from her darkness glorious rise!
When David's son his father's throne shall claim,
While Zion's daughters tune their harps of joy,
And the world's promised jubilee begins!

I hear my son at times in thrilling words
Rebuke his young companions' scoffing taunts,
And tell them of the coming judgment near.
His life austere, his fastings, tears, and prayers,
Tell of the burning ardour of his zeal,
Which soon may sap his strength and crown my woe,
Leaving me childless in my helpless age.
I with a mother's anxious fears look on,
Yet dare not blame. To such high mission called,
I know God will sustain him to the end.
No human weakness can restrain or turn
Aside the appointed hour. But of thy Son!
Shines on His head the crown of glory bright?
Beams in His eye the Majesty Divine
Of Godhead? Round His steps are angels seen,
Obedient waiting? By what wondrous signs
Is His high birth made known? Such questions rise
Before me often as I silent muse;
Now thou art come to answer all my thoughts,
Tell me of the Child Jesus!

MARY.

We have come
Up to the feast now He is twelve years old,
To bring Him, as our sacred rites require,
To offer sacrifice, and before the priest
Renew the vows we made when in my arms,
A beauteous babe, He smiled. Then all my own
He seemed, as in His helpless grace He lay,
Drawing from my fond breast sweet nourishment.
I could not bear that any hand but mine
Should wait upon His wants; in Joseph's arms
I scarcely cared to trust Him; He was mine,
My own first-born, such child as ne'er before
It was a happy mother's right to claim.
Long o'er the wonders of His birth I mused;
The shepherds' story of the angelic throng
That, in the starry night's soft radiance, shone
A visible presence bright on Bethlehem's plain,
Waking the echoes with their heavenly song.
How I was startled when these brown-faced men
Came in hot haste, with staff and crook in hand,
And asked to see the Babe, nor were content

Till they were brought into the very place
Where in the manger He was laid asleep
Beside me, while our slumbers Joseph watched.
" 'Tis a fair child," they said, and lightly touched
The swaddling bands that wrapt Him, murmuring soft,
Low words of tenderness, as He had been
Some nursling of their flock just newly found.
And while we still in Bethlehem weakly lay,
Came visitors from the far distant East,—
Grand reverend men of language strange, with deep
Far-seeing eyes, and brows high-arched and broad;
And ever to themselves they talked and held
Up to the light a scroll, whereon was traced
In shining colours planet, star, and sun,
Whose mysteries they told us they could read;
And that a star had led them to the Child.
With heads uncovered they, who looked like kings,
Before His cradle knelt in worship low,
And offered royal gifts, so strange to see
Spread out in that mean stable's littered stalls.
Of this from Joseph thou hast heard before,
When to the feast he came on our return

From Egypt to our home in Galilee.
My choice would then have been to live apart,
My child to nurse, no earthly love to own,
No meaner joy to taste, with visions bright
Of angels ministrant and heavenly choirs
Of holy saints, hymning their sinless praise
Responsive to my happy lullabies.
Such life I pictured suited to the place
I held as mother of the living Christ;
Yet all how differently has God ordained!
And as in humble faith the answer came
To that first salutation of the angel—
"Behold the handmaid of the Lord,"—I said,
"Let it be unto me as thou hast told;"
So humbly I have learned to serve and wait,
Obedient to His guidance, owning still
God's way is best, whose wisdom placed my lot
In woman's holiest sanctuary on earth—
A tender husband's home, blessed by the sound
Of children's voices; while, most dear of all,
My first-born Son delights me with His love.

ELISABETH.

But how can He so long concealed remain
One of a humble household pressed with toil,
The lowliest of the people for His friends,
No signs of royalty to tell His rank,
Yet born to be a king above all kings
That rule on earth, armed with Jehovah's power?
How does He wear His heavenly dignity?

MARY.

From His sweet infant days He has grown up
In grace and holiest beauty, winning praise
From every friend; yet in His humble walk
So diligent at work, so patient, shy
Of all display. A pleasant human child,
Not less in outward form than in the mind;
Growing in stature as blessed children grow,
In wisdom, knowledge, and in strength increasing;
Yet ever simple, pure, and guileless seen
In all His actions. Wondering, oft I watch
Him at His daily task by Joseph's side,
And for the coming glory longing sigh.

ELISABETH.

What say the neighbours? Dream they of His worth?
Thy sisters, do they still reproaching doubt
Thee, and thy husband's weakness pitying, blame?
And Joseph, how comports he with the Child?

MARY.

The story of the past seems nigh forgot.
My sisters often turn their heads askance,
Or frown upon the Boy; but with harsh words
They dare not vex me. Did they speak them now,
I am too happy to feel ill at ease—
So sure of love and trust from those whose love
Makes all my joy. Those three years that we passed
In exile have worn out vague murmur's guess,
And He is now received as Joseph's son.
A close companionship unites the two
In happiest friendship, tender and serene;
While mutual reverence marks their intercourse,
Each to the other ever yielding honour,
Until I oft forget which is the elder
And know not which is dearest. Yet to me,

Who hold in faith the secret of His birth,
Jesus appears engirt with many a sign
Of high nobility and sinless grace;
So that my trust grows stronger year by year,
Although to others nothing seems to tell
Of future royalty or power Divine.
But if, impatient of the lowly guise,
Proud words break from my lips, with tender care
Jesus then brings me to some quiet room
Or leads me out among the sunny hills,
And soothes my troubled spirit, whispering soft
The promise of Isaiah's deathless psalms
Or David's sacred songs, or breathing out
His soul devout in fervent humble prayer,
Till I can only weep in calm content
And with fond kisses bless the Comforter.
Thus have the changing years passed swiftly on.

ELISABETH.

It warms my aged heart to hear thy tale.
Even as I listen, questions yet unasked
Seem answered by thy words; each lingering fear

Hushed into silence ere it found a voice.
I hear of ancient prophecy fulfilling
In strictest letter, so that doubting souls
May learn to own thy Son the promised Christ
So long expected. As a child He comes,
Born of a woman, so in nature one
With those He comes to ransom, sharing all
The weakness of our fallen human race,
In helpless infancy, youth's fond desires,
And growing up to manhood's high resolve
And power of stern endurance, gaining strength
To suffer or to rule, as heroes rise
Above the outward circumstance of birth,
To fill their place among the great and good
By God appointed. When the time is ripe
For clearer vision, then the God will shine
Through the encircling veil of mortal form,
And Israel own her King, the world its Lord.

SCENE IV.—IN MARY'S HOUSE IN NAZARETH.

MARY; SUSANNA, *Joseph's Sister;* JAMES, *the Lord's Brother.*

SUSANNA.

I hear thy Son is now in Galilee.
What means He, Mary, by such journeyings,
For ever on the road from town to town?
Has He forgotten all His filial love,
Thee and His home forsaking; caring no more
How thou art cared for, who so kindly once
Took thought for all thy wants? Sure such a change
Scarcely speaks well for any manly son.
Thy face looks sad and anxious. What has come
To thee, since at Nathanael's marriage-feast
Among the guests thou didst so proudly move,
Thine eyes still fixed on Jesus, as to catch
The sunlight glory of His tender glance,—
The first bright smile, as those for morning watch
Who through the night with longing hearts have pined?

Then when the servants drew the sparkling wine
From the pure water-flasks, and the news spread
That by thy Son this miracle was wrought,
How did we all rejoice, and praised thy wit
Which bade the servants on His bidding wait!
Canst thou not give Him better counsel now?

MARY.

I dare not give Him counsel. Even then,
When all were seeking me to pour their thanks
For my poor help, my heart was full of pain
Because I saw my Son was ill at ease
Between His wish to please me, and the call
Of higher duty claiming all His thoughts.
No blame is His that in Capernaum
He better loves to stay than here with me;
Since the proud townsfolk up against Him rose,
And, of His words disdainful, tried to wreck
Their envious humours on His guiltless head.
They would have cast Him o'er the dreadful hill
To sudden, cruel death; but from their hands
He fearless passed. E'en yet my eyes grow dim

When on the giddy dangerous peak they rest,
And I am glad that He has left the place.
Jesus has left no duty unperformed,
Nor would I wish to bind Him to my side
When heavenly voices call to noble deeds.

JAMES.

Who knows the sound of heavenly voices now?
The days are past when great Jehovah talked
With man on cloud-girt mount or bush of flame;
Or from between the cherubim gave forth
The holy oracles to priest and king.
What can a people show of noble deeds,
Whose sacred places alien hosts profane?
We only deeper in our bondage sink
From all this clamour and vain waste of words.
Think of the doom that John the Baptist met
By his stern preaching: all unheard condemned,
To please a tyrant's cruel mistress slain
By Herod's headsman in the prison hold.
Are heavenly voices silenced in such sort?
Yet all men held he was a prophet come,

And greater than Judæa ere had seen
Since bold Elijah shamed the priests of Baal.
When John has failed, can Jesus hope to win?

MARY.

Yes; He shall rise above all adverse foes;
For God shall give to Him His father's throne,
To reign in all the glory and the power
Of David; and his kingdom ne'er shall end:
I hold this promise sure.

SUSANNA.

No sign appears
To give it any worth. See how He acts,
Wasting His life away in ceaseless toil;
Wandering about weary and travel spent;
Followed by eager crowds, now calling forth
Loud praises from the ignorant populace
By His strange works; now waking direst wrath
Among our priests and rulers by His words.
They say He claims to be the Christ of God.

JAMES.

Nay, aunt, believe not all you hear. 'Tis true

That Jesus teaches with strange power, and leads
The people captive with His eloquence.
But to proclaim Himself the anointed One,
The true Messiah, David's royal son:
Howe'er a foolish mother's partial love,
May strain bewildering fancies to repeat
Her own wild wishes with a prophet's voice,
That were too bold a dream. He dares not--

MARY.

Dares!
Be silent, James; you must not use such words
Of Him. He is not to be judged of thee.

JAMES.

And why not so, my mother? Is He not
Thy son, as I am? Dare I not to blame
For actions which my common sense disproves:
The brother led by thoughtless friends astray;
The brother who has grown up by my side,
Shared all my boyish sports, climbed the steep heights
Of Judah's flowery mountains, joyed to watch

The sun at morning rise, at evening set,
Above the sparkling waves of our loved lake?
No dearer joys we knew than to descend
Across the summer hills to that fair spot,
Amid the limpid waters to disport;
Or with swift oar to speed our boat along.
He at our daily toil with steady stroke
Industrious plied His task, learning the trade
Our father taught us both. If He was first,
And ever proved the best, that was His right
In virtue of His place as eldest born.
Am I to hold Him less than brother now,
If I may save Him by some honest words
From bringing scorn upon our father's name?

SUSANNA.

But James, *thou* art my brother's eldest son.
Mary! hast thou the secret kept so close
That yet thy children do not know the truth
Of this first child of thine? Did Joseph die
And leave his son ignorant of his birthright?

JAMES.

Mother! Hadst thou another husband, then?
I thought my father was thy first?

MARY.

He was;
And yet Susanna speaks the truth, no more
To be concealed: He is not Joseph's son.

JAMES.

Not our own father's son! Mother, this grief
Has touched thy heart too deeply. Oh unsay
Those cruel words, that I may know thee still
As best of mothers; of women purest, best.
Forget my careless words about thy dreams
Of future greatness for thy children nursed.
Thou knowest I never cherished envious thoughts,
When thy affection sweetest seemed to rest
On Jesus, He thy love so well repaid.
Forgive my hasty humour, so ill-timed,
When for His absence thy poor heart is sad,

And rumour wakes alarm by idle tales.
We will together follow Jesus now,
And with entreaties, fond and loving words,
Recall Him to our home. There, blessed again
With sweet domestic peace and calm content,
Our days shall glide along, till these two years,
With their wild tumult and excitement, fade,
Into a pleasant memory of the past.
My place with thee to lowly duties bound,
Has held me back too long; nor did I dream
That His enthusiasm had soared so high:
I hoped the fire of zeal would soon burn out,
And leave Him patient for His after-life.

SUSANNA.

I cannot see the end; and yet it seems
He cannot leave this work unfinished now:
Having so far advanced, He must go on,
Or bear a vain impostor's brand of scorn.
Even now they say, that from Beelzebub
He holds the power to charm the sin-possessed,
And cast out devils.

MARY.

Susanna! not too far
Must thou with scornful words of Jesus speak.
He an impostor! That He never was,
Nor can be. His dear name with Satan's joined,
And He the Son of God? Who speaks such words?
I am His mother, and will hear no ill
Of One so pure and good.

SUSANNA.

I meant no ill;
I love Him with affection true as thine.
And more in wonder than in scorn I speak;
Repeating only what I needs must hear,
When with His followers I so often sit
To learn His gracious words. Oft to my house
He comes for food and rest, nor ever fails
Of kindly welcome; 'tis the very love
Which draws me to Him, that excites my fears.
Strange doubts perplex me; to the past I look,
Setting it by the present, till my mind
Can scarcely realize which is the truth.

Is this the lowly man whom I have known
Industrious, toiling by my brother's side,
Obeying all his wishes, as one born
To serve and labour 'neath a master's eye?
Or is it all a dream which we have dreamed,
And only now awakened to behold
This King whom God has sent, whom we have named,
In ignorant pride of heart, our kinsman dear?
He is so great, if all we hope is true;
So less than nothing if He be not great.

JAMES.

Why, what has happened to awake such thoughts?
I cannot understand this wonderment.
'Tis true that with a grasp of mind above
The common grovelling herd Jesus can teach.
We of the house of David ever wait
For one among our families to arise
A Leader of the people. Once I hoped
That in my brother we should see fulfilled
Some of our ancient prophecies; but soon

I left Him, in despair of any good
To issue from so wild a policy.
He seems content to win the vain applause
Of those our poorest priests would scorn to touch:
The meanest leper is not held by Him
Too vile for his embrace. He can clasp hands
With any sinner who desires His help.
After that marriage feast in Cana held,
I, doubting not the miracle which spoke
Conviction to the strongest unbelief,
Followed Him to Capernaum, hoping then
He would a chosen army organize
To give our tyrants battle. But in vain
I urged this course: He would not be controlled
To take advantage of the times, and rise
Victorious on the tide of fortune, borne
Straight onward to a throne. Unmoved, He heard
My plans for sure success so wisely framed,
And so I left Him to His own device;
Nor have I much concerned myself of late
With the vague rumours that have reached me here.
The dream must end as other ill-formed schemes

Have ended, with fresh woe for Israel,
And for the schemer sorrow and disgrace.
Now I must rouse me if but to avert
The blow which strikes my mother's heart through His.
Mother, be calm, and let Susanna speak;
Howe'er we act, I now must know the truth.
What is He doing now?

SUSANNA.

What He has done
Since first He entered on this doubtful course;
Only the gathering signs of gracious power
Stir up the people to fresh questionings.
Those twelve disciples whom at first He chose
To share His wanderings, learn from Him the truth
He teaches, and bear witness to His works,
Tell many a wondrous tale of His great power.
Philip, my cousin's son, is one of them,
And I from him hear much from others hid,
(Though He works openly that all may see).
He heals the sick, the hungry people feeds,
Making a few small loaves supply the wants

Of thousands, when for bread they fainting were
After a three days' fast. Nor is this all:
They say His word can bring the dead to life!
But yesternight a woman came to me
(She dwells in Nain), and her son had died;
He was her only child, and in the grave
The husband of her youth long years had lain.
Just as the mourners with the bier had passed
Beyond the city gates, a crowd approached,
And from among the people forth there stepped
A Man of royal mien and stately form,
But pale and weary as with travel spent.
Straight to the bier He came; with tenderest voice
Some words of pity to the mother spoke;
He touched the bier, and bade the mourners pause;
Then with a voice of holiest power and love,
"Young man, I say to thee arise," he said;
And from death's dreamless sleep her son arose,
And spoke his grateful thanks for life restored,
While she, his mother, speechless stood for joy,
And all the people wondered, and the awe
Of great Jehovah's presence on them fell;

And Him they glorified, and praised His grace,
For that a Prophet in His might had come,
And that was Jesus!

MARY.

Of that I heard not.
'Tis but another sign to glad my heart.
Oh happy mother! I will praise with thee
That in my Son so great a Saviour speaks.
Soon must the people their Messiah own.
Zion, arise and shine! thy Light is come.
O great Jehovah, own again Thy Son,
Thy Well Belovèd named by Jordan's wave!

JAMES.

Mother, what words are these? Strangely they sound
From lips like thine. Thy reverence deep and pure
Has oft rebuked the thoughtless voice which spoke
Jehovah's name too lightly; now thou darest
To join in equal honour thine own Son.
What meanest thou? I know that in past years
You held His lightest word as sacred law,
And every action perfect. Now too far

Your partial love leads you to overlook
All this vain-glorious aiming after fame.
The nation, weary waiting for the Christ,
Is credulous of mind, and quickly won
To faith in marvels; simplest acts wake hope,
And wonder grows, by silly women spread.
Where shall this end but in disgrace or death?
The rulers watch His steps with jealous eye,
And muttered threats are heard at every feast.
Do any of the priests on Him believe?
They who the holy writings daily search
Would be the first to hail Messiah come.
Our ancient prophets speak in language plain,
That by a great and mighty King our land
Shall be delivered from the Gentile yoke.
How can a village carpenter aspire
To such high place? He is beside Himself.
I tremble for His life, and must no more
Withhold my hand, if haply not too late,
To turn him from this dangerous path aside.
He is my brother—ah! I had forgot,
Mother, the truth! I now must hear it.

MARY.

Yes;
'Tis best that I no longer keep it back.
Yet think not I shall tell a tale of shame:
I have been silent partly from the fear
Of claiming honour for Heaven's gift of grace
On me, unworthy, graciously bestowed;
And that some sacred power my lips restrained
From converse on so high a mystery,
Even by myself so little understood.
But thou before hast heard enough to raise
Attention to His glorious descent.
Dost thou remember when thy father died?
Around his bed we stood, and by his side
With loving hand clasped firmly Jesus held
His arm around me, while His right hand lay
In Joseph's grasp. Awhile thy father slept,
Then, waking with a sigh, he looked around,
Till his gaze rested on the face so dear;
And kindling with the light of heavenly joy,
His eye grew bright, and from his lips there broke
A song of praise for all that he had seen

Of God's anointed, Israel's Saviour come !
The virgin's Child, long promised, born at last
In Bethlehem's stable, while the angels sang
To wondering shepherds watching on the plains,
Glory to God, and peace on earth to man !
"Son of the Highest, thy great day is near !"
With words prophetic he to Jesus said—
"All the isles wait for Thee, and Judah mourns
For thine appearing. Let this darkness cease,
Take thy great power and reign, Thou Holy One."
All this thou heard'st. And when two years ago
Thy sister Anna in her beauty passed
From earth to heaven, thou knowest how on His breast
(He dearest of all brothers to her heart),
Leaning in patient weakness, she had sat—
Just ere her eyelids drooped in death's cold sleep,
With loving reverence to her lips she raised
The hand she clasped, and to Him murmured low,
"Jesus, my Saviour, Lord of life and love,
Son of the Highest, yet my brother kind."
(That name she must have learned from Him, or from

Some angel hovering near; for I was bound
To silence till the day of God should come.)
Then with a smile she died. Those words so strange
He heard with calm, glad look, as one who hears
From friend beloved the sound of welcome praise
Spoken for deeds of love yet unavowed;
Or as a prince might hear the heralds call
Him to ascend his father's vacant throne;
And as He bent above the silent form,
The light of morn through the near casement broke,
And touched His brow, as if to chase the gloom
Of the night's parting with the joy of day.
Thou and thy brothers wondering stood aloof,
Unconscious of the solemn meaning hid
In those farewells. Upon my heart they fell
With all the power of angel messages.
'Twas but a few short weeks from Anna's death
When tidings came of John's swift-spreading fame,
And Jesus laid aside the workman's tools,
Not, as in former days, with thoughtful care,
But with strange haste, unheeding where they fell.
I, watching ever, felt a thrill of pain

Pass through my heart, as if that act declared
That He had risen above our humble lot
Into a sphere where e'en my mother-love
Should scarcely dare to follow. Still to watch
If only at a distance, I drew near
To Jordan's banks; and, hidden midst the crowd,
I saw Him from the baptism of John
Ascend, and heard from Heaven the sacred Voice
Proclaiming Him the Son of God beloved.

JAMES.

But of His birth the story I would have:
Who was his father?

MARY.

James, I almost fear
To speak of that, lest thy cold doubts profane
With mocking words the sacred holy truth
To me so dear, to Israel and the world,
Weary and helpless now, so full of hope.
Yet I will tell thee all. Pray God thy heart
Yield fitting reverence to the wondrous tale.

To make thee understand my humble part
In this great mystery, I must first go back
To girlhood's thoughtful days. Early I learned
The promise to our nation of a king—
From Judah's tribe, of David's house, to rise,—
A Saviour to restore our ancient power,
And give deliverance to our sons oppressed
By heathen rulers. Often on the words
Of holy psalm and prophecy I mused,
And dwelt in fancy on that coming Lord,
And wished mine eyes might see His glorious reign.
A vision of its joy possessed my soul,
And silent wandering through the summer woods,
All nature seemed to whisper His sweet name.
Daily at morn and eve my prayers arose
To the Eternal, that He would no more
Delay His promise, but His people bless.
For country, people, tribe, and father's house,
I sought this honour; of my own reward
I dreamed not, nor desired my lowly state
To change,—content in others' joy to share.
Orphaned in early childhood, oft I yearned

For a kind mother's gentle sympathy;
And when thy father came with earnest words,
And sought me for his bride, my heart grew glad
With a strange joy to know myself beloved.
He, though a lowly village carpenter,
Was yet an heir of David's royal line,
And noble in the worth that kings might prize.
All my fond aspirations, too, he shared,
And of Messiah's coming oft we talked,
And wearied for the joy. We were betrothed,
Our marriage-day was fixed, and all was bright
For a new life of sweet domestic peace.
One evening, when the sunset glory lay
In golden light above the western hills,
I musing sat, and watched with earnest gaze
The splendour, thinking of that brighter dawn
When on the earth the Sun of Righteousness
Should rise in glory that no night could dim.
Then suddenly, between me and the light,
A form appeared encircled with the sheen
Of heavenly radiance, and a voice I heard
With greetings strange salute me by my name,

Calling me highly favoured of the Lord,
Blessed among women. Troubled at the sound,
I trembling bent, when, answering my thoughts,
He bade me calm my fears, for he had come—
An angel messenger—with joyous news,
And I should soon a Holy Child embrace
(No son of man) of me a virgin born,—
Son of the Highest. He calmed each rising doubt,
Till hope within my bosom grew to faith,
And I gave answer, "Be it unto me
As thou hast said." A few more weeks and I
Was conscious of the mother's wakening hope.
Soon of my state thy father, full of grief,
Heard, and was roused to anger stern and proud:
With cold hard words of blame he turned from me,
Till in a vision God to him revealed
The truth, and to his guardianship consigned
His Holy Child, the chosen name repeating
Which me the angel had already told;
So just before His birth our marriage gave
To Joseph legal sanction of this right,
And as his first-born son was Jesus known.

JAMES.

I hear with wonder and surprise this tale.
Mother, you must not ask such faith from me
As my good father, in his simple trust
And guilelessness of heart, so freely gave;
And yet in all those peaceful twenty years,
While I had wit to know the love of home,
To thee his tender reverence never failed.
From thee no word I ever heard before
That woke one thought of doubt as to its truth,
And now I will not let an hour's mistrust
Destroy the faith and honour of my life.
The past is past; better forget it all,
Nor vex ourselves with dreams and visions old.
This sounds too like some airy fancy bred
In heathen poet's brain. Not long ago,
Two proselytes from Athens at the feast
I met and held discourse with; they talked much
Of gods they once believed in, who did mix
With men in scenes familiar, making sport
Of all the powers of Nature; choosing brides
'Mong royal maidens, famed for golden hair

And forms of earthly beauty; and of one,
The son of Jove, who yet should come to shake
The world, and with the powers of Evil war.
These men of Greece had turned from their false gods,
And found in Hebrew prophets better guides
To lead them to the true and living One.
Shall we profane His Great and Holy Name
By idle tales like heathen fables framed?
'Tis well the priests have never heard of this.
As true-born son His vain pretensions rouse
Their bitter wrath. What would they give to learn
What thou hast told? Soon would the sternest doom
Of law and justice fall upon His head.
I can no more restrain my warning voice,
For yet I love Him, and would deeply grieve
To see His boldness court untimely end.
Come with me, mother; we will seek Him out,
And reason with Him of this madness; plead
With true affection, careful of His good;
And win Him back to patient, honest toil.
When our Messiah comes no cloud of shame

Shall o'er His birth hang doubtful; no poor home
Shelter the Royal Heir of Judah's throne.
An earthly king, endued with power Divine,
He shall not prove His right to staring crowds,
But all the princes of the world shall come
To worship at His footstool, and behold
The glory and the joy of Israel's tribes.

MARY.

I will go with you since you wish it so,
But yet He will not come; and I am loath
To vex Him with such pleadings. Once before
Jude and Salome tempted me to join
With them in like appeals, but all in vain;
Their efforts proved we never could come nigh
To where He stood; and when our messenger
Told Jesus we were waiting, He looked round
And claimed more friendship with those listeners there,
Who waited on His teaching, than with us.
Yet I am fain to see Him,—I will go.
Come, thou, Susanna, for kind company;
Thy true affection ne'er has failed to me,

Since I thy brother's honoured name have borne.
Sorrow may wait me, and I need a friend;
For I am weak, with anxious fears oppressed.
I have no husband now to share my thoughts,
And thou art more than others in thy love;
Being his sister whom I loved so well,
And loving Jesus, who is more to me
Than all my other children at this time,
When gathering clouds of danger o'er Him hang.

—o—

SCENE V.—IN THE HOUSE OF LAZARUS AT BETHANY.

MARY, *the Mother;* MARTHA *and* MARY, *Sisters of Lazarus;* LAZARUS.

THE MOTHER.

And Jesus is not here! I felt so sure
That I should find Him with you. What can keep
Him on the way so long? Where can I go
To seek Him now? If in Jerusalem

He venture to appear harm will be done:
The town is in such tumult,—every crowd
That gathers in the streets calls on His name.
The people restlessly His coming wait,
Many with weary eyes, where welcome hides,
Impatient of His absence; others scowl
As if their hatred watched for an excuse
To vent itself in deeds of violence.
Strange men have stopped me, asking of my Son
With bold rude questions; and a Pharisee,
Whose child I knew by Jesus had been healed
Of deadly sickness, spoke such dreadful words
Against Him, as did make my blood run cold.
His very kindness seems to rouse their wrath.
Such signs presage a storm. I must away
To meet Him. By His earnest wish restrained
I long have kept aloof, nor interfered
With aught He said or did, nor even showed
That I had any claim of motherhood
On His attention; and my steadfast faith
Of happy end ready to crown His work,
Has kept me hopeful, stilling all my fears

With words of promise. Now, I must awake
From this fair dream if I may save His life;
His tender heart melts at a woman's tears,
And no one ever pleads to Him in vain.
If I could only find Him, He might hear
My pleadings now. Tell me where can I go:
You are His chosen friends, and know His plans.
Where is He now?

MARTHA.

We know not of His plans;
He seeks no counsel, gives no confidence,
But goes and comes, welcome at any hour.
Sometimes we know His presence to expect,
And now are looking for Him every day.
Dear mother, thou must here His coming wait.
Thy journey and the weight of anxious fears
Have worn away thy strength, and made thee old
Before thy time. Believe not any harm
Can fall on Jesus; He will soon be here,
As is His wont, to rest before He joins
The crowds that in the Holy City meet

To celebrate this greatest of our feasts.
Has he not been in Galilee of late?

THE MOTHER.

Ah, no! He comes no more to Nazareth:
Too coldly were His miracles received
Among His kinsfolk and His early friends.
Even those who of His blessing gladly shared,
Repaid His gifts with scorn and harsh reproach.
His brethren, when He would not hear their words
Of counsel and reproof, turned from His side,
And hastened His departure, struck with dread
Lest in His doom they should be called to share:
For all the land is ringing with the fame
Of His great works. And in the Sanhedrim,
I heard to-day, the clamour for His death
Grows louder, and the priests say He must die.
My Son! my Son! If this should be the end!

LAZARUS.

It cannot be! To look on me in health,
And pride of manhood's power, is answer best

To all such fears. I from the sleep of death
And the cold silence of the sepulchre,
By His dear voice awakened, bid thee chase
All sad forebodings of a fate so dark.
For never can our dear Lord Jesus die;
Is He not Christ, holding the keys of life
In His own power?

THE MOTHER.

For others He may use
His right Divine, but will He for Himself?
This is the question that I ever ask.
He spends His strength that others may have rest;
Provides the poor a banquet while He fasts
In all His acts there is no thought of self.
He never gave offence to any friend.
It must be those who follow Him that rouse
Unwise excitement, and provoke the priests
He is so humble and loves peace so well,
He would not speak hard words, but if the mob
Proceed to deeds unlawful in His cause,
To save His friends He may submit to die.

MARY OF BETHANY.

To die! Dear mother, banish all such fears;
It were a dreary world if He should die.
Such cannot be the end. I heard Him say,
"I am the resurrection and the life;
He that believes on Me shall never die;
Though dead, shall rise again." If He can loose
The chains of death for others, will He stoop
To bind them on Himself? Who then could stand
Beside our loved ones' graves, and call them back
To our embrace, and turn the mourners' wail
To songs of gladdest praise? He only waits
Till the full time appears; then shall He claim
The throne of David, and that day of power
Shall find a willing people waiting round
His footstool; all His enemies subdued
By holy love to own Him Israel's King,
The Lord's anointed, our Messiah come.
Then shall Jerusalem arise and shine
In all the glory of those ancient days
When the first temple to Jehovah rose,
And God between the Cherubim abode;

Then shall begin the glorious reign of peace.
No Gentile hosts shall trample on our rights,
Nor sounds of war the startled echoes wake;
But songs of praise, from morn till dewy eve,
Rise from the throng of happy worshippers.
All shall be holiness unto the Lord,
And earth be glad with beauty and with love,
And every land have rest: Jesus, thy son,
Our King, the centre and the sun of all,
In righteousness and power and blessing crowned!

THE MOTHER.

I know our prophets speak such promises,
And oft their sweetness has refreshed my soul;
But now their words like far-off murmurs sound.
I cannot rest; a dread of coming woe
Broods ever in my heart. I hear the voice
Of Simeon speaking loudly in mine ear,
As in prophetic words he blessed the Babe
When first, within the holy temple's walls,
To God we gave Him. "Yea, a sword shall pierce
Thy own soul also:" this to me he said,

Words that for years so little meaning bore
I almost had forgot the dread they woke;
Now in their mystery darkest sorrow lurks,
When all my soul is troubled for my Son,
My dear first-born, mine own, yet mine no more
To hold, as other mothers hold their child,
In full possession of His love and right
Of fond obedience. I have learned to stand
Aside before a higher holier claim,—
The mother's tender homage to her son
Lost in adoring worship of her Lord.
I know He is Divine, the Son of God,
On highest mission sent. The deathless past,
With all its holy memories, clearer shines
Than ere before, through those long troubled years
Of restless change, since He began to teach.
The angel's salutation when he came
To tell me of His birth; the wondrous star
Which led the strangers to His cradle bed;
The heavenly hosts that to the shepherds sang,—
All that of miracle and sign I held
Deep hidden in my heart, and pondered o'er

In many a sacred hour of holy joy.
All those sweet days of cloudless heavenly peace,
I passed when humbly in our home He dwelt,—
His words of kindness, and His deeds of love,—
That pure calm life—I live again in thought:
Yet is its gladness wrapt in solemn gloom,
And still my heart calls wildly for my Son.
Would He were here? You think that He will come?
His gentle words would still this strange unrest.
What sayest thou, Lazarus?

LAZARUS.

He will be here,
'Tis just six days before the Passover;
Then He is ever present, worshipping
Among the faithful. This He makes His home,
Returning from the city's noisy din
When wearied nature claims its meed of rest.
He has been absent now so long, we hope
That soon He will arrive and quietly wait
After His journey till the feast begins,
By His loved presence gladdening all our hearts.

Poor mother, do not vex and fret thyself
With gloomy thoughts. Let us remember all
The wonders He has done, the joy He works
For those who trust Him; so our souls shall rise
Above the chastening of our fondest hopes
To songs of praise. Why should His friends look sad
When Jesus comes?

MARY OF BETHANY.

My brother, thou art right.
We will prepare to meet Him with sweet smiles
And words of welcome and all tenderness,
Of loving sympathy and comfort kind.
We will surround Him with affection's gifts,
Honour and trust and gladness. We will wear
The robes of joy, as the fair bride arrays
Herself in shining garments for her king;
Or as the earth her flowery mantle dons
To greet the summer sun, the light and source
Whence all her beauty springs. He is our Sun:
We will rejoice before Him.

MARTHA.

I must see
That the guest-chamber is in readiness
For His repose, and must at once prepare
Fitting provision for the twelve who share
His labours and should also share His rest.
Peter and James and John with us will stay;
The others in the village often find
With kindly neighbours welcome. I must send
To tell they are expected.

MARY OF BETHANY.

Mother, thou
Wilt lay aside thy mantle. On this couch
Lay down thy weary head; here I will sit
And hold thy hand, as oft I listening kneel
At Jesus' feet. Now I will talk to thee,
And Lazarus will tell us of the fame
Of our dear Lord, for many hearts are moved
To bless His coming. We will with converse thus
Beguile the lingering hours till He arrives.
Now you are resting?

THE MOTHER.

My tired body rests;
But still my busy thoughts pursue their quest.
I see my Son by angry foes arraigned,
Or sinking underneath the heavy load
Of toil and suffering, wandering all alone,
Hungry and cold and weary. Were I there
To comfort Him or win Him to assert
His heavenly right, and drop this strange disguise!
He ever calls Himself the Son of Man,
As if that were the name He loved the best,
Or felt it more required His earnest words
To press its meaning on the listeners' hearts.
I have been seeking Him in many a town,
But ever came too late; He had but gone,
Leaving the record of His presence writ
In many a grateful heart. One told me how
He had been blind, and Jesus gave him sight;
Another deaf, and He had made him hear.
A man I knew, dumb ever from his birth,
Was telling to his children pleasant tales,
And singing in a mirthful, happy voice;

And when I spoke my wonder at this change,
He told me that a Man had loosed his tongue
Who was the Christ, though now known as the Son
Of a poor carpenter in Galilee.
He knew me not, but when he saw me weep
He bade me follow Jesus, and to Him
Make known my grief, and He would cure my pain.
I follow, but am ever far behind:
Now I have lost the trace of His dear feet.
I know not where He is.

JAMES (*entering*).

Mother! At last
My search is not in vain. When camest thou
To Bethany? I have been seeking thee
With anxious haste for many a weary day
Through the whole country. Why forsake thy home
And bring upon us all such care and grief?
'Twas only by a happy accident
I heard that thou wert here. The approaching feast
I knew would find thee at Jerusalem,
Still wasting thy poor heart in eager hope

To see the people own thy Son as King.
Wishes how vain! while still so obstinate
He proves to all advice. Is Jesus here?

THE MOTHER.

No, but His friends expect Him, and I wait
To meet Him. Hast thou from the city come?
He is not there? Nothing has happened yet
To make you fear for Him?

JAMES.

Yes; every hour
The danger grows! never in any year
Have I beheld the people crowding in
To this high festival so many days
Before the appointed time; some strong desire
Of coming change seems to possess the minds
Of all, and expectation links His name
With every wildest scheme. The rulers watch
Some slight pretext to seize Him and disperse
His followers, if all perish not beneath
The avenging sword of Rome. He must be warned.

All who are friends and wish to save His life
Must urge His flight. In secret for a time
If quietly He remains, the storm may pass.

MARY OF BETHANY.

How can He fly, and leave unfinished thus
The work He has begun? His people bound,
His nation slaves, the temple courts profaned
By feet unholy, all His travel lost,
The throne of David trampled in the dust,
And He, its rightful Heir by God proclaimed,
With power of Godhead armed? His mighty deeds
Shall grow to higher purpose. When the hour
Of His proud triumph comes, He will be ready
To meet and vanquish all His enemies;
Nor will brave warriors fail for Him to fight.

JAMES.

How can His followers fight? No soldiers trained,
But simple, harmless men, women, and babes!
Are these the hosts of Israel who shall war
Against the Roman legions? Let Him pause

Till freedom's cause is ripe, till tyrant rule
Has spent its strength in ruthless cruelty,
And every Jew is roused to drive them forth
From our loved land, and David's throne restore.
I question not His right to reign our King;
My heart, in true affection early bound
To Him as brother, now accepts the signs
Jehovah to His teaching deigns to grant.
I hail Him our Messiah promised long,
At last revealed, the nation to redeem.
I only seek to save the infant cause
Of patriot zeal from overhaste of act,
Lest it should end in failure. Prudence wins
The battle oft, when bravery courts defeat.

LAZARUS.

I have been listening like a dreamer vexed
With looking on a scroll of ancient writing,
Whose words he read yet wondered at the sounds
His lips gave forth, so meaningless they seemed.
James, are the only warriors those who wield

The sword which strikes with swift, unpitying death?
Are all the records of our history lost?
Forgotten all the love which chose our race
To keep Jehovah's worship pure on earth?
Is Israel sunk to a mere Gentile state,
But one among the many, not the first?
Are we not destined o'er the world to reign
Princes and kings and priests, a nation crowned
With honour and with glory yet untold
When every other kingdom is destroyed?
We may be fallen, not conquered while we hold
Our birthright sure, as Abraham's holy sons.
Hast thou beheld the armèd hosts who stood
Around Elisha on the mountain slopes?
Hast thou been in the unseen world, and marked
The Cherubim and Seraphim who wait
Obedient by the throne, and angel throngs,
With chariots of fire and wingèd steeds
Of power, to bear them on the high behest
Of the Eternal? Shall His Son, who holds
The keys of life and death, before the strife
Of helpless mortals from His purpose turn?

I know not what the coming days may bring;
Humbly I wait to learn my Master's will.

MARY OF BETHANY.

My brother, since the silence of the grave
Shut out the restless clamour of the world,
Thy spirit has been trained to wisdom high
And knowledge all sublime. Not less to me,
The voice of God has spoken while I sat
At Jesus' feet, and from the fount of light
Drank in the gladness of immortal hope.
He is our King, whose royal voice recalled
Thee from the grasp of death, to bless our home
With thy loved presence; dearer for the pain
Of those four days' sad mourning, ever now
A witness to our hearts of Jesus' power
And ready sympathy, and right Divine
O'er every world to reign. He soon will come
To cheer our longing eyes, and o'er the land
The Sun of righteousness shall cloudless shine.
See, the poor mother sleeps to wake in joy,
Her holy Son to greet. James, leave her here.

We will with tender care upon her wait,
And calm her fears, and woo to needful rest.
Remain thou also: we have room for all
The friends of Jesus in our happy home.

MARTHA.

The Master comes. I hear the joyous shouts
Of gathering crowds, cry, Hail to Jesus! Hail
To Him who raised our townsman from the grave.
Jesus and Lazarus they oft repeat
In concert; joining with His blessèd Lord
Our brother's name. Come; let us forth to meet
And welcome our Redeemer, as our wont;
The foremost bands are almost at the door.

SCENE VI.—A ROOM IN JERUSALEM.

MARY, *the Mother;* HIS BROTHER *and other* RELATIONS; *many* DISCIPLES *coming and going.*

JAMES, THE LORD'S BROTHER.

Mother, this day our time of sorrow ends.
No more shall Jesus in lone exile hide;
No more dispense His favours to the crowds
Of helpless poor who wait upon His steps,
Pressing their claims with loud and vulgar cries,
So that their servant, rather than their King,
Thy Son hath seemed. To nobler mission called,
A nation's voice has spoken and proclaimed
His right to rule as Israel's promised One.
With loud hosannas at His feet they bend,
A willing people, in His triumph glad.
He hears their pæans, and their homage owns;
No more can He refuse to accept the place
Of King. His royal power He must assert,
And as a leader act, and conquest gain.

THE MOTHER.

What! Has the council recognised His claim
To be the true Messiah? Is He owned
By the high-priest as David's royal heir?
How came this change? Let me hear all the tale,
That I may fill my aching heart with joy,
Exulting less as mother of a king
Than in the joy and safety of my Son,
Whom danger long has threatened. Now I breathe
More freely, and could weep sweet humble tears
Of penitence, to think my faith so weak
As doubt the promise of His coming glory,
Because He waited for the appointed time
To ascend His throne.

SALOME.

Nay, mother; not so far
His path hath led. Much yet remains to do
Ere Jesus can be crowned as Israel's King.
Try to be calm; this sudden change of moods
Accords not with the royal dignity
Of her who is the mother of the Christ.

We, who are of His house and family known,
Must learn to hold the honour of our place,
And show ourselves as fit to grace His court,
When all the kings of earth with greetings come
And gifts of homage due, and in our land,
With glory like to Solomon's, He dwells
In palace fair with beauty all adorned—
Thy place, a throne beside Him.

MARY MAGDALENE.

Is it so,
That such a change is near? I have but come
From Galilee to see Him at the feast,
And have not yet met any of our friends.
Will Jesus now be crowned as Israel's King?
How will the Roman governor consent
To grant this boon? Shall we our city hold,
Or in the temple will His sway be owned?
Completion swiftly sets the seal of fact
On looked-for changes, when the times are ripe;
But this seems all too sudden. Has He asked
To be anointed King?

NICODEMUS.

There is no cause
To hope for such a change. Would it were so!
If He were set on earthly power or state,
I do not question but it might be won;
But this He shuns. I came to seek Him here,
And urge discretion, if He will not take
The leadership at once, and smite our foes.
There will be bloodshed ere the feast is past,
Unless some power dispel the gathering storm.
The scribes in fear and anger watch His words;
Their muttered threats gain force, and hatred broods
In gloomy silence 'mong the Pharisees.
The council wavers; many secret friends
Yet fear to raise their voice, while open foes
Call loudly for His death.

THE WIDOW OF NAIN.

His death! Away
With such vain words of terror. Jesus die!
He raised my son to life when on the bier
The mourners bore Him to the sepulchre,

And still he lives in youthful vigour strong.
They have no power to slay the Lord of life.
A word, a look, would vanquish every foe,
And make the hand fall cold that raised the sword.
They cannot harm Him.

THE MOTHER.

Could I only think
He thus would use His power! But never yet
In all His holy life has it been so.
Ne'er for Himself a single act has shown
Him stronger than the weakest human friend
Who with Him walked the toilsome path of life.
When fainting under burdens carried far
And long, He oft has helped the wanderer
By bearing all his load. And never once
Has Jesus' voice been heard denouncing death.
He may be strong to suffer, not to smite;
He only lives to bless.

JAIRUS.

But He can change
Foes into friends by the great power of love.

I knew Him long before I owned the truth.
When in the synagogue at first He taught,
And reading in the law and prophets spake
Of the fulfilment of the ancient words
In this our day, and showed by many a sign
His Godlike power, I shared the unholy wrath
Of those who blamed the pride of Joseph's son;
I could not yield the honour due to Christ
To the poor carpenter of Nazareth.
His family had no place in Judah's house
To give Him rank by right of noble birth;
Mary His mother was not known or held
Above her neighbours for aught wonderful
In faith, or queenlike presence, as might be
A woman who had born so great a Son.
He had grown up among us known and loved,
But never rising o'er His humblest friend
To grasp at honours or command renown;
When all at once He burst upon our sight
A Teacher of new doctrines, speaking out
His burning thoughts with more than prophet's power,
Transformed in all but in the lowly mien,

Which could not in our minds fitly accord
With what we in Messiah looked to see:
So with His enemies I long took part.
But ah! there came a day when in my home
My only daughter on her fever bed
Lay dying, and of Jesus then I thought
In my soul's bitter anguish, and recalled
His miracles of healing, and the words
Of loving comfort I had heard Him speak.
Her mother, too, urged my slow yielding hope,
And pressed me with wild prayers to seek His aid.
I found Him, and low kneeling at His feet,
Moaned out my plaint and waited for His grace.
Slow moved the crowd, and to my eager haste
Each moment seemed a year; yet in His eye
I read the answer to my earnest cry,
And struggled to be patient. All His path
Was thronged with waiting suppliants, every step
Marked by an act of blessing. When at last
We neared the house, a messenger we met
Who told us all was o'er, and my loved child
Had passed beyond the reach of human skill.

Trembling I heard, yet had not time to grieve
Ere from the Master's lips came forth the words,
" Fear not, only believe : " and hope revived.
Calmly He passed amid the wailing groups
Of noisy mourners. Peter, James, and John,
He called to follow, while her mother led
Us to the darkened chamber where she lay,
Our best beloved, in the cold sleep of death.
He took her lifeless hand in His warm grasp :
" Maiden, arise !" He said, and from its flight
The obedient spirit to its home returned ;
And rising, to our glad embrace she came
Beauteous and smiling, flushed with rosy health ;
And still her presence fills our home with light,
A loving daughter, gift of Jesus' love,
More precious than before our child appears.
Thus I was won to own my Lord, and praise
Jehovah's grace which led me to His feet ;
So may His kindness every heart subdue,
And turn His bitterest foes to loving friends !

THE MOTHER.

Where is He, James ? What raised the doubtful hope

Of which you spake? I have been waiting here
Weary and anxious, powerless yet to seek
That knowledge which I earlier might have gained,
Had not my feeble steps in effort failed
To bring me to the temple.

JAMES.

Can it be
Thou hast not yet heard of the entrance made
In grand procession, when with loud acclaim
And eager shouts the people hailed Him King
Of Israel blessed, who came in God's great name?
Green branches from the palm-trees many brought
To strew His path, while some their garments spread
Before Him in the way; hosannas loud
Repeating till the echoes rang again
With the deep gladness of their jubilee.
As from the mount of Olives on they passed
Towards the city, Jesus in the midst
Riding in royal state, the priests stood dumb,
And Pharisee and scribe looked scowling on,
Not daring once to damp the people's joy.

THE MOTHER.

I knew of that, and followed in the way
Until I saw them pass the city gates;
Then I grew weary and required to rest,
And scarcely gathered strength to reach this house,
Where I have since remained, nor aught have heard
Of Him or what is doing in the town.
Each one seems busy with some secret work,
And I who cannot join am left alone.
Only to-night have friends together met
As in past years, in this quiet upper room;
Soon may we welcome Jesus as of old:
He will soothe all our doubts and calm our fears.

MARY MAGDALENE.

Where is He now? Some days, I think, have passed
Since that short triumph. I of it was told
At Bethany, while resting there to greet
Martha and Mary and their brother; he,
From the lone, silent, grave so lately called;
In mien how noble Lazarus has grown
Since that strange sleep! Although he is the same

In kindly charity and pleasant speech,
Upon his brow a lofty calmness rests,
And in his eyes the light of Paradise
Seems shining through the dew of happy tears,
As if he tried to veil the joy which flowed
From memories of unspeakable delight.
I could but silent sit and watch his face,
Till with a smile he chid my wondering gaze,
And claimed more cheerful welcome back to earth.
Then of our Lord we talked, and my fond tongue
Spoke out the gladness of my grateful heart,
Of all His friends the meanest yet most blest,
From worse than death saved by His tender grace.
O Jesus, when around Thy glorious throne
The thousands of all ages praising stand,
I, kneeling at Thy feet, shall claim to tell
The sweetest story of Thy power and love.
Now I must go to seek Him. Though the night
Approaches swiftly, I will find my Lord.

THE MOTHER.

I will go with thee. Since He cometh not,

Upon my spirit gathering terrors press.
Ever before this time His custom was
To meet me in this pleasant upper room,
When the long duty of the day was o'er,
Or ere its toilsome labour had begun.
A few short happy moments ever given
To quiet converse with Him, cheered my gloom,
And blessed me with His love. Never could son
Wait on a mother with more tenderness,
And now I may have vexed Him with my tears.
My vain request I saw He could not grant,
When I did plead to know of His designs
At our last meeting. I have waited here
But yet He cometh not; forebodings dark
Increase with every rumour, till their power
Has seized with icy grasp upon my heart,
And like a weight of iron in my breast
It lies. Some active work will break the spell,
And rouse me from this lethargy of care.
Let us away before the darkness close!

NICODEMUS.

This is no time for women to go forth
Alone into the streets. Truth will not hide;
We are amidst the stir of troublous times.
There is no more evasion of the fact
That Jesus must assert His dignity,
Not only by the weight of holy words,
And deeds of love, and Heaven's approving voice,
But by the force of worldly arguments,
Proving the valour of His friends in arms
Against the Romans; humbling first the pride
Of those who rule within the temple courts.
Though but a semblance Israel yet retains
Of national distinction and self-rule,
It centres there; the priests must first be won
To own His leadership and join His cause.
I could be bold were I assured of this,
That of such service Jesus is prepared
To give approval, or would even accept
The crown so won; but to commit one's self
To an uncertainty so grave, demands
Unreasoning partisans to faction bound,

More than the courage of a patriot friend.
I see in Him the true Messiah, come
To win men's hearts to God; yet fails He still
In rising to the outward royalty
Of kingship long predicted of our Christ.
Now in this crisis with Himself remains
The option of defeat or victory.
In either He will show Himself sublime
In power and virtue; yet for Israel's good,
Our temple and our country, I must wait
To know His plans before I more advance.
Here let the women be advised to stay;
Jairus and James and I at once will go
To seek Him, and persuade him earnestly
To join us and relieve His mother's fears.

JAIRUS.

'Twere better thou alone shouldst urge thy search.
James, with the women stay; while I return
To Bethany, if haply there He rests.
No need to wrong thy prudence by rash acts;
And spies in every corner watch our steps,

Who are committed to defend our Lord
Whatever danger threatens. He is more
Than freedom, country, temple; my life's worth
Of happiness or honour I would give
Freely for Him, and own that all was best
Which He saw right to do. Yet may He need
Friends of thy stamp as well. No doubt remains
That times are perilous; each passing hour
Is fraught with hazard and important change,
And we must seize the occasion as it comes.
Well if we meet it bravely as true men,
And sons of Abraham, faithful unto death!
Seek, then, the city; there thy rank is known;
And what the council threatens thou mayst learn,
And timely warning give. My humble place
Among His followers will secure my way
To Jesus' presence, if they stand prepared
To enforce His right against the arms of Rome.
I will go first and, for thy safety, show
Our secret passage, that leads out beyond
This well-known house of meeting to the street,
Where we may part unnoticed in the crowd.

[NICODEMUS *and* JAIRUS *leave.*

THE WIDOW OF NAIN.

Why all this anxious care? What do they fear?
James, is thy brother not to be our King
As thou didst tell? Why is there any doubt
Among the people that He is the Christ?
Have we not long expected such a one?
And now He comes, how can the priests refuse
To own as Lord Him who can raise the dead?
The Gentiles have no part in Israel's joy.
Must our Messiah seek His crown from Rome?
Before Him all His enemies shall fall.
The whole earth is His footstool, whom our God
Has sent to ransom us from chains and death.
What could they mean by all that grave discourse?
Thou saidst that Jesus had been chosen king
By all the nation; why this vexing doubt?

JAMES.

I scarcely know. I hoped the path secure,
Requiring only time to overthrow
All obstacles that might impede His course
To rest and glory. Since those thoughtful men

Have spoken, many doubts rise in my mind.
They know the feeling in the town so well,
And better estimate the council's power.
'Tis truè that eager voices hailed Him king;
Yet, without definite purpose, it were vain
To count too much on this. I had supposed
That in the background, urging on the shouts,
Were Nicodemus and some secret friends,
Whose voices led the council, not restrained.
It was not so, and soon the cause is lost
Which only on the fickle crowd depends.
The stormy passions of a lawless mob
Rouse at a word, and, like resistless waves
Lashed into fury by tempestuous winds,
Break from the hand that seeks to stay their force.
Aye changeful as a feather in the blast,
They shout for any name that strikes their mood:
Rome or Judæa, Cæsar or the Christ,
They hail with pæans. What is one to them
More than another, so their thirst is fed
By pillage, rapine, or the piercing cries
Of tortured victims? Oh, poor Israel!

Back to thy tomb of slavery must thou fall?
Is our redemption still a distant dream,
And Jesus but one more whose blood must flow
Beneath the Gentile sword, and——?

SUSANNA.

James, no more.
Look how thy mother's cheek is blanched with dread.
What need to rush on sorrow with such haste?
"Sufficient for the day the evil is."
Mary, remember'st thou when from His lips
We heard these words? Come, let us now take heart,
And comfort one another with the truths
We learned from Jesus. Long my soul was dark
With unbelief and pride now my faith rests
As on a rock secure. He is The Christ,
Happen what may. No one but thou and I
Of this small company were by His side,
When on the mount He sat, and listening crowds
Thronged all the grassy slopes. What holy words
He spake, blessing the poor in heart and meek,
Proclaiming the glad news of love and peace,

And telling of our Heavenly Father's care,
That clothes the grass with beauty, waking flowers
At every spring-time from their winter's sleep,
And brightening all the land with gorgeous blooms—
Roses to shed their fragrance on the air,
Fair lilies of the field, in royal dress
Richer than Solomon's, our eye to please;
And feeding from His full and bounteous store
All living creatures in the woods that roam,
And meanest sparrow on the house-top nursed.
And thus He pressed the lesson on our hearts,
Can we His children, heirs of earth and heaven,
Be by His love forgot who cares for these?
Mary, be glad for all thy Son has done,
And leave to God the purpose and reward.
Seek now thy couch, and let the wings of sleep
Waft thy worn spirit to brighter scenes of rest:
We here will watch.

THE MOTHER.

Nay, ask me not; 'twere vain.
My eyes are heavy, but they will not close

Even for a moment. Darkness wraps me round,
Heavy and cold; the light of heaven grows dim;
This weary earth seems all, and here no rest—
Nothing but brooding woe and nameless shapes
Of adverse spirits warring in the gloom,
Which ever deepens. Nearer let us draw,
And share the fire's spent heat, and chase the night
With silent prayers that hope may yet return.

MARY MAGDALENE.

Did Jesus come with thee from Galilee?
I learned from Martha that with them He stayed
After His journey. Thou wert also there,
A guest at Simon's feast, when Mary poured
The ointment on His feet. What other friends
Are with thee in Jerusalem?

THE MOTHER.

My sons,
Sisters, and cousins. Rumour spoke so loud
Of some tumultuous outbreak at the feast,
That every heart was stirred to anxious care

About His safety. He had been concealed,
Or living for a time in peaceful quiet,
At Ephraim, near the wilderness. I knew
Not where He was, and wandered forth alone
To seek Him; then we met at Bethany.
This is our place of meeting in the town,
Thou knowest; but here Jesus has not come;
And when we parted something in His face
O'ercame me with its tenderness of love
And solemn sadness. Never has He said
Farewell with words of blessing so devout;
With heavenly comfort pointing to the time
Of meeting, by the great eternal throne,
With the young sister whom He loved so well,
Joseph, and all our loved ones. When I wept
And spoke of earthly joy and honour near,
He turned away with sorrow on His brow,
And gave no answer. Ever since, my fear
Has grown that I shall see Him never more;
No more in sweet affection clasp His hand,
And with a mother's service on Him wait.
Something has come between us: could I think

It is His dawning glory raising Him
Above my poor companionship, my heart
Would in His greatness be content to share
Living apart, and only from afar
Beholding. Mothers cannot always reach
Up to the manly stature of their sons.
Why should we seek to bind them by the strings
Of the forgotten cradle, or retard
Their steps, which climb the height of honour's path,
By keeping time with ours? Yet well I know
That would not part His filial heart from mine.
He would not so deny me. Hark, who comes?
Perhaps He now is waiting at the door.

JAMES THE DISCIPLE, *and* PHILIP *enter.*

MARY MAGDALENE.

Welcome, good friends, so that you bring us news
Of our dear Lord, to cheer our longing hearts
And calm His mother's fears.

THE MOTHER.

James, in your looks
I read no joyous tidings. Where is Jesus?

Why comes He not? You seem both wild and scared
And panting, as if forced in haste to fly!
Have you forsaken Him in danger's hour?
Oh, my loved Son!

SUSANNA.

Sister, it is not well
To yield to such despair. Their tidings hear.
Philip, speak thou, for James seems vainly trying
To form some words; although his pale lips move
Quickly, they give no sound.

JAMES (*aside to* MARY MAGDALENE).

I cannot speak
With that poor mother's flashing eyes upon me.
Jesus is taken!

THE MOTHER.

What of my Son? Why stand all silent there?
Has no one seen Him?

PHILIP.

We have been with Jesus
Since early evening, in an upper room,
Where for our company the Paschal Lamb

Had been prepared; and there with converse sweet
His accents charmed the listening hours of night.
Would I could now recall His loving words
Of heavenly peace and comfort.

THE MOTHER.

Comes He not
To gladden us with the same welcome sounds?
If He is there, I must go find Him now;
This long suspense is wasting out my life.
James, tell me what it means. I am His mother.
He has no other friend on earth so dear.
If danger threatens, I must go to Him.
What matters my poor life, if I can save
From one sad thought a heart so true and good?
In happiness He might not need my love;
But in His sorrow He may turn to me.
No one can know the worth of such a Son
Like me, His mother. None can understand
What He has been to me in years long past,
What He is still. He is my first-born Son.
Vex me no more; I must to Jesus go.

JAMES THE DISCIPLE.

Sit down, dear mother. Where He is we know not,
Save that a band of soldiers treacherous came
Upon us in the garden, where, withdrawn
To the accustomed shade, His prayers arose;
While Peter, John, and I sat watching near.
Our eyes with sleep were heavy, though we strove
To keep us wakeful. Twice the Master came
And roused us up, and gently chid our sloth;
While for our weakness still He made excuse.
There was such anguish in His voice and look,
A weight of sorrow bowed His weary head,
And on His brow stood glistening drops of sweat,
That in the moonlight showed like crimson stars.
Ne'er had we seen Him with such grief oppressed,
Nor from His lips heard such a cry of pain,
As when He turned from us in prayer to kneel.
A heavy cloud of sorrow o'er us hung,
And we beneath it powerless seemed to fall.
The third time He returned, resolved and calm,
And by His side an angel seemed to walk—
Seen but a moment, as in haste we rose

To obey His call. Then suddenly a sound,
The measured tread of soldiers marching, broke
The gloomy silence of the doleful night.
Forward we sprang with outstretched hands, to shield
Our Lord, if Him the unknown foe assailed;
When from behind us, through the parted boughs,
The glare of torches flashed upon His face.
And from the crowd Judas—vile traitor!—stepped,
And with pretence of friendship would have kissed
His cheek; but Jesus, with sad dignity
And sorrowfullest look, drew back and said,
"Judas, dost thou betray me with a kiss?"
And then the multitude around Him closed,
And He was bound and hurried from our sight.

MARY MAGDALENE.

And thus you left Him! In the cruel hands
Of deadly foes, betrayed, forsaken, bound!
Oh, my dear Lord! Come, mother, let us haste!
Susanna, come! If women may be weak
And sooner faint beneath life's daily cares,
In danger's hour affection makes them brave.

Where went they? Tell us, for we must begone
To set Him free, or at His side to die.

PHILIP.

Mary, it cannot be. Would it be wise
To expose His mother to such fearful risk
At this dead time of night? Here she is safe.
Jesus was of her comfort ever thoughtful,
And would He not our indiscretion blame,
Which failed to shield her in this time of dread?
The streets are thronged with a wild lawless mob,
And from the Pharisees among them mix
A band of secret agents, turning all
Their senseless fury to their own designs
Against the Lord and all His chosen ones.
I only wait the signal to depart
And join His other followers gathering now.
All that can be attempted we will try;
But Jesus has forbidden us to fight.
When Peter, bold and hasty, drew his sword
And struck a servant of the high-priest's house,
Cutting his right ear off, with ready hand

Jesus in blessing touched, and healing power
Making it whole again, and bidding Simon
Put up his sword, nor with such weapons war.

THE WIDOW OF NAIN.

But why forsake Him? Could you not have kept
Beside Him? For your presence might have helped
To shield from insult, if you could not save
From prison bonds.

SALOME.

He will not stoop to that.
He has the power to free Himself and call
For vengeance on His foes. He will not bring
Disgrace upon our family and house
By such supineness. I will not believe
He means to suffer in imprisonment.
He only acts to try the malice nursed
Against Him by the priests; then will He turn
And bid defiance to their ill-used power.
He is the rightful heir of David's throne.
My children next Him come in place of birth,

Being His brother's sons. He loves them too.
James, we must go and try to urge this plea.
He may be won to hear us, now the worst
Has come upon Him. Philip, to what place
Was he conveyed?

THE MOTHER.

O daughter, leave such thoughts!
Is thy poor pride of place a thing to move
One answering echo in a heart like His?
Is thy ambition, or thy children's, worth
A moment's care in such an hour of woe?
Yet I would hear the end: where went the crowd?
Is He alone?

JAMES THE DISCIPLE.

Peter and John have followed
The hostile bands. In wild confusion first
We turned and fled; then rallying, we agreed
In hasty consultation to disperse
And warn His friends. John keeps the bands in sight,

And will hold closest watch on all they do.
When aught transpires, Peter will bring us word.
Two of our number went to Bethany,
Lazarus to rouse, for he too is denounced
Before the council. Others seek the homes
Of known disciples. Philip and I the task
Most heavy bore, to bring the tidings here.
Mother, you have heard all. When morning breaks,
John will be here to tell us where they hold
Thy Son, and we will lead you to Him then,
If that may be attained.

MARY MAGDALENE.

He will be here
Long ere the morning dawns. We must forget
Whom we are speaking of, to nurse such gloom.
They cannot keep Him prisoner, who can loose
The bands of death. Are any human chains
So strong as the dark fetters of the grave?
Is any tyrant so supreme as sin,
Holding its victims with a grasp so close
That soul and body in it writhe in vain,

Submitting to the vice which poisons all
The springs of life, and both with torture kills?
Yet Jesus, with a word of pardoning love,
Can set the weakest from this struggle free.
No power of Satan can o'er Him prevail;
The world's redemption rests upon His head,
And He must live to finish all His work.
Let us with earnest prayers before the throne
Of great Jehovah plead for Him, and ask
His quick release. He owns the power of prayer,
Teaching us by example how to tell
Our souls' desires; as in a father's ear
A trusting child pours out its humble plaint,
So let us plead.

THE MOTHER.

I cannot raise such prayers,
The words I try to speak sink in my heart;
I can but cry for strength—a wailing cry,
As of an infant who no thought can form.
When will the morning dawn, and give me light
To seek my Son? Hark! is there not a sound

Of coming footsteps? At the door they pause:
Susanna, haste! open; it may be He.

SUSANNA (*opening*).

Joanna! Thou in such a strange disguise:
Whence comest thou?

JOANNA.

From the high-priest's palace.
Jesus is there, and I have much to tell.

PHILIP.

Is He a prisoner still, accused, condemned?
Sent John no message what we were to do?
Where do they keep Him?

JOANNA.

In the high-priest's house,
Guarded by Roman soldiers, till the day.
In secret then the council is convoked
To sit in judgment; if by it condemned,
He to the power of Rome will be delivered.

John knows not on what grounds, nor how to meet
With healthy opposition hostile fraud,
Yet thinks there will be time to plead His cause
Before they to extremities proceed.
But those who seek His death are busy now
With accusations false, and mocking words,
And low unmanly deeds, venting their spite
Upon Him, while He sits in regal state,
Calm and unmoved, a King with sorrow crowned,
Still in His Godlike dignity serene.

THE MOTHER.

Joanna, hast thou seen Him?

JOANNA.

Yes, dear mother;
The high-priest's daughter, Anna, as thou knowest,
Is almost won to own Jesus the Christ,
But dares not to her father's house reveal
The secret. She and I are life-long friends;
Our mothers were as sisters in their youth.
Often we meet, and yesterday we spent

The evening reading in our sacred books,
And seeking after truth to guide our faith,
While telling to each other pleasant tales
Of works by Jesus wrought. The hours soon passed,
And, pressed to stay the night, I gave consent;
Scarcely our chamber's quiet had we sought,
When sounds of tumult startled all the air,
And the dull night grew clamorous with woe,
When, in the midst of Roman soldiers, bound,
Jesus we saw, led to the council hall.
In haste, with Anna's robe and veil close wrapped
Around me, I, unquestioned, joined the crowd.
Strange horror kept me silent, as I heard
The accusing voices and insulting words.

THE MOTHER.

They do not hurt Him? Safe from violence
Is He as yet?

JOANNA.

I cannot tell thee all:—
'Twas but a minute, though it seemed an age

That I looked on, when to my wondering gaze
Jesus replied with a sweet, mournful smile,
And by a silent gesture bade me go.
Of thee at once I thought; then John drew near,
And in a hasty whisper told the case,
And hastened my departure. At the door
The high-priest's servant Malchus for me found
That soldier's cloak, the better to secure
My safety; and with thoughtful kindness led
Me through the streets, well past the shouting mob.
Nay, do not fear; I told him not my errand,
Nor could he know where my quick steps were bent.

JAMES THE DISCIPLE.

That was the man whose ear the Master healed,
Struck off by Peter. Has his voice been raised
Against the Healer?

JOANNA.

I did not hear him speak;
To me no word he said, but silent walked
As one who dreams, and knows not that he sleeps.

John told him that I wished to reach my home;
He fearing for my safety, yet desired
With Jesus to remain. And in reply
This cloak he offered, and passed on before,
Till where the empty pathways made it safe;
And then he turned and left me to my will.
Now I must go. Herod a banquet holds,
And Chuza waits upon him. Soon the morn
Will set Him free. He may some plan advise
For prudent action, or at least obtain
Leave for His friends to see Him. At the court
Are many who hold influence with the king;
We must be ready every plea to urge.
John waits to see the end.

THE MOTHER.

What shall it be?
O God, be merciful to Thy dear Son!

SCENE VII.—A ROOM IN JERUSALEM, IN THE HOUSE OF JOHN THE DISCIPLE.

MARY, *the Mother of Jesus; Friends and Disciples.*

JOHN.

Mother, hast thou no tears? Why with fixed eyes
Of such unutterable sorrow sit?
Hast thou no power to tell thy thoughts of woe?
Let thy grief find a voice, or thou shalt die.
Didst thou not hear, when Jesus on the cross
Looked His farewell to thee with eyes of love
And pitying tenderness; to me He said,
"Behold thy mother." Now, in His dear place,
Mine is the right to guard and comfort thee;
How can I show my love, how wake to sense
Of outward things a mourner so enwrapped
In sorrow that she neither hears nor sees?
Susanna, has there been no change in her
Since to the temple worship I went forth

At early morn? Thou hast not left her side:
Has she not wept nor spoken?

SUSANNA.

Since that hour
No sound has passed her lips, nor sigh, nor moan;
Nor has she given any sign to show
That she hears aught, save when the opening door
Gives entrance to some friend: then she looks round
With a quick glance, only to sink again
Into the same dull attitude of woe.
Yet can we wonder? None can mourn like her.
I almost feel it sacrilege to approach
This mother in such sacred sorrow bound:
What words of comfort can I try to speak,
When my own heart is breaking with its pain?
Yet it were well if we could rouse her now.
Do thou try once again; she seems to listen.

JOHN.

Speak, stricken mother! Would Jesus have approved,
Seeing thee in this trance of dull despair?

Look up! thy friends are round thee, waiting all
To offer sympathy. I am thy son,
A friend whom Jesus loved. Thy sister here
Waits by thy side, grieving to see thee thus.
Wilt thou not speak to her?

THE MOTHER.

What day is it?

SUSANNA.

It is the Sabbath; and we only wait
Till it is past, then will we seek the grave,
And with sweet spices and rich perfumes give
Holy anointing to the sacred form.
Thou wilt go with us, sister; rouse thee, now.
Eat of this bread to give thee needed strength.
We must be early at the sepulchre.

THE MOTHER.

Wait we for morn again? 'Tis ever night,
And darkness hems me in, and keeps me back
From my dear Son. Has it been ever day

Since He was taken, condemned, and crucified?
And I looked on and saw it! Did the sun
Shine then, or silvery moon, or any star?
Tell me I only dream. Wake me to hear
That Jesus lives, and I will then be glad,
And eat with thankful heart this offered bread.
But He is dead. I saw Him on the cross;
Watched all the anguish of His dying pain;
Heard His last words; and marked the weary head,
Bowed with the weight of suffering on it laid,
Droop lifeless on His breast. Oh, fatal hour,
That brought such sorrow! What is life to me
Since Jesus died?

MARY MAGDALENE.

But mother, still He lives
In the eternal mansions, where the saints
And all the holy angels hymn their praise.
We must be patient; said He not, "I go,
But come again to take you to myself."
We, who have known the gladness of His love,
Can find no joy apart from Him, no rest

To cheer our mourning hearts, save in this hope:
Soon may He come to take us to Himself.
Even now the heavenly hosts may be arrayed
In their bright robes of pure celestial light
To lead the Bridegroom home, and meet us here
(Who, waiting, mourn His absence), and prepare
His throne in glory, calling us to see
And share their gladness who with Jesus dwell:
Then we shall part no more.

JAMES THE DISCIPLE.

But, ah! we thought
He was the Christ, the true Messiah, come
Israel to ransom, gather all our tribes
From sin and exile to our holy land,
And reign among us in the royal power
Of David, with the wisdom and the pomp
Of Solomon and all our ancient kings;
Claiming the world, its glory, and its wealth
To great Jehovah; bringing back the joy
Of Eden's sinless bowers to this poor earth.
Now Judah mourns, and every land is dark;

Jesus is dead, in whom lay all our hope;
Still waiting for the Christ must Israel pine
In dreary bondage 'neath the Gentile yoke!
Even to the last I thought He would be saved,
Although the angels in His cause should fight;
Had we believed He would be crucified,
We might have tried to raise an armèd force
And set Him free. Yet that His strict command
Forbade us. Could it be to try our love?
My heart is heavy with conflicting doubts,
And pain of sorrow and untold regret.
All was so sudden: from our first surprise
That He was taken, scarcely had we rallied
Till all was over, He was past the reach
Of any human aid, and we were left
Like sheep without a shepherd, as He said,
Scattered and lost in darkness and in gloom.

PHILIP.

We all forsook Him in that hour of dread:
What bitter anguish now the thought awakes!
Had we but kept beside Him, had we tried

To shield Him from these cruel ruffian bands,
He might have still been here, or, at the least,
Not all alone would He have borne the shame
Of such a death. To hang beside Him there,
As those two robbers, would have proved our love,
And been a crown of honour nobly won.
But we were dastards all. Oh for the power
To live again the irrevocable past!
A moment's failure stamps our future years
With stain of foul dishonour, never more
To be effaced by penitence or tears.
How could we yield to such unmanly fear!
The truly brave are never so surprised.
I could spend all my life in bitter plaints
Against my weakness; but the heavy grief
Outweighs all other sorrow and regret.
My Lord is sleeping in the silent grave,
And we can hear His loving voice no more.

SUSANNA.

And did He leave no message, speak no word
Of warning? Was He taken unawares?

Surprised into submission by the power
Of His assailing foes, of hope bereft,
Of friends forsaken, left to tread alone
So dark a path? Who dared to seek His death?
Upon what plea was He condemned? What voice
Gave such a sentence? Like the vilest hung
Upon the cross between two common thieves!
It is too dreadful. Was there none to help?
And He so good, so innocent, so holy!
Of all whom He had blessed was there not one
To plead for Him? For all His deeds of love,
The sole reward a painful death of shame!
How different looks the past, now He is dead!
Oh, could we but recall it! That last night
You spent together was He still the same?
How talked He then?

JOHN.

With many tender words
He told us of His deep abiding love
To us and all His friends, and much He spoke
Of sudden parting, which we heard unmoved

By any vision of such woe as this.
He told of mansions in His Father's house,
To be prepared for us when He went home.
The Father's love He praised, as if the theme
Were an unfailing strength to His own heart;
Yet ever, as by hidden sorrow moved,
His words more solemn rose, till every voice
Was hushed, and sternest eyes grew dim with tears.
And oft He spoke of One whom He should send,
The Comforter, the Spirit of all Truth,
Who would remain with us, the Father's will
To teach, and all His own blessed words recall.
All memories now are so enwrapt in grief,
That though the words remain their power seems lost;
Our hearts a grave where Jesus' spirit sleeps,
As in the sepulchre His body rests.
No word by Jesus spoken ere can fail,
The Comforter will come, and to our eyes
He in the Master's likeness may appear.
We can but wait and hope.

THE MOTHER.

Who speaks of hope,
That mourns for Jesus dead? The very fact
That He could die leaves nothing more on earth
To hope for or to mourn. Oh, my dear Son,
What sacred joys lie buried in Thy tomb;
How pleasant were Thy happy infant years;
To my fond heart what joy it was to hold
Thee in my arms, and watch each graceful turn
Of the soft clinging hands, the wondering smiles
That followed the bright sunbeams on the floor,
The golden curls, thick clustering round Thy brow,
The rosy dimpled cheeks and eyes of love!
Then I was all unlearned in baby ways,
And every action woke a new surprise.
With what delight I watched Thy days increase,
The innocent wisdom of Thy lispéd speech,
The manly firmness of Thy pattering feet
Running to meet the offered gift, or give
The sweet caress so often fondly claimed.
How pure, how good, were all Thy childhood's years;
Never one anxious thought didst Thou awake,

Save once, when in this mournful city's crowds
We parted from Thee, and our journey home
For one long day pursued ere thou wert missed.
Then quick returning, Joseph reasoning well
Of Thy desires, we to the temple came,
And found Thee sitting there among the scribes,
Listening, and with profoundest questionings,
Rousing their wonder. At our call Thou camest,
And left our home no more till years had shed
The strength of perfect manhood on Thy head,
And duty called Thee to Thy work of love,
This day so ill repaid. Poor garrulous tongue,
Thou hast been waking memories that have loosed
The fount of tears, and now they choke thy words,
For He is dead round whom those memories cling.
And yet my deepest sorrow still remains
Untold, for He was more than mortal child
To mother dear; the promise of His birth,
So lost in darkness, adds to all my woe
A weight of gloom no ray of hope can pierce.
I cannot trust my thoughts on that to dwell,
The earthly grief is all too hard to bear.

You who were present tell me of that day;
I would learn all, for then I nothing saw,
Or heard, or knew, but that my Son was dead.
We waited for the morning, I remember,
When in disguise to us Joanna came,
And told us He was in the high-priest's house.
What happened next?

MARY MAGDALENE.

Soon as the day was clear,
Susanna, thou, and I went forth to seek
Admission into Pilate's judgment-hall,
Where John had told us Jesus was arraigned,
And where we hoped our voices might be heard
In witness of His innocence and truth.
But every street teemed with a furious mob,
And threatening cries of vengeance rent the air:
The thirst of blood was in each ruffian face;
Like hungry wolves, they pressed each other on,
Impatient for some victim to devour.
Vainly we strove to thread the surging crowds;
Hemmed in on every side, each moment grew

The fear that, wert thou known, on thee might turn
Their deadly ire. When, on the housetop near,
Joanna marked us, and our purpose guessed,
She our great danger saw; with wise device
Beckoning us onward to the gate, she came
And from our peril freed us—not too soon;
For scarcely had we gained the sheltering walls,
When some rude voice with fierce invectives called,
"The Galilean women mix as spies
Among us; let them share their Leader's doom!"
A thrill of horror almost froze my blood,
To think what fate thou hadst so close escaped.
From the housetop we watched, safely concealed
Within Joanna's tent. Slowly the hours
Moved on to noon; when, backward wildly borne
Like tempest-driven waves, the people turned,
Shouting, "To Calvary!" and soon the sight
That met our eyes made every heart grow cold.
We looked, and looked, then turned our wondering gaze,
With horror fixed, to seek the answer, hushed
Upon our lips, but written on each face.

Can this be He? each anguish-stricken eye
Asked of the gazer. Then again we sought
Anew the sight, if that could break the spell.
Mother, thy sobs come fast, that dreadful day,
So well remembered, why with words recall?

THE MOTHER.

Go on, go on; I wish to hear the end.
These sobs and tears are better than the load
Of woe that has been pressing on my heart.

MARY MAGDALENE.

Speak thou, Susanna, for I can no more.
Jesus, my Lord, that I should look on Thee,
Fainting beneath the cross, and live to tell
The tale of shame!

SUSANNA.

Could any heart unmoved
Behold that wild procession! Memory faints
Through sorrow, and can scarcely fix the scene

With its dark colours in the form of words.
Sister, I cannot; 'tis enough to hold
The unspoken knowledge of such heavy sin.
If I could comfort thee with mingled tears,
Or heart's blood falling slowly drop by drop;
If I could bring thy Son to bless thine eyes
By my life freely offered for His sake,
Thou then wouldst weep no more; but to recount
The sorrow of that day I have no strength.

MARY MAGDALENE.

John, thou canst take the heavy burden up
Where I had left it. As the crowd passed on,
To us thou camest, and with thee we watched
The solemn end. Although my lips be mute,
Yet would I hear the story of our grief
Told by another dwelling on the theme,
As mourners ever swell the dirge of woe
With melancholy sounds, each answering note
Tuned to a sadder cadence, till they fall
To distant echoes whispering round the grave:
While Jesus sleeps let us tell how He died.

JOHN.

In this cold midnight, when the darkness broods
Above the sleeping city, wrapt in guilt
As in a poisoned mantle, let me tell
The story that would change the smiling day
To sunless winter and unending gloom.
I will take up the thread by Mary broke;
Yet backward for short space my thoughts must turn
To the strange mockery of that judgment-hall,
Where Justice hid her face, and gave to hate
And pride and sinful weakness all her power.
Within the high-priest's palace all the night
I waited, listening to the words of scorn,
The insulting blows, the mockeries and revilings
Of Him who was my heart's most honoured friend,
The treasure of whose love was all my joy.
Each wound they gave Him struck my aching heart;
Yet I looked on all powerless to defend.
Then, when the morning came, with hurried zeal
They sent Him on to Pilate's judgment-seat,
Themselves without remaining, lest the stain
Of Gentile presence should pollute their hands.

With subtile questions Pilate strove to find
Grounds for the sentence which the rulers asked,
But foiled in this, confessed Him innocent;
And with stern voice rebuked the unjust demand,
And would have set Him free. Then rose the cry,
The false and wicked plea, that Cæsar's power
By Him was menaced. Pilate, wavering, sent
The accusers and accused to Herod's bar.
This wicked king tried hard to win from Christ
Some heavenly sign, and curious questions asked,
But answer all his art failed to obtain.
Then Herod, stooping to ignoble ire,
His soldiers joined in base, unmanly deeds,—
Mocking Him in their spite and cruel scorn,—
And sent Him bound a prisoner back to Pilate,
Who by this token of respect inflamed,
Ambitious and with poisonous flattery won,
Delayed no more, but in the very act
Of granting to the rulers their request,
Heaped on the Jews indignity and scorn.
On Jesus' head they placed a crown of thorns
In mockery of state with purple clothed;

With cruel hands they smote Him, then with taunts
They bade the priests go crucify their King.
And thus in shame and pain they led Him forth,
And laying on His neck the heavy cross,
Along the streets to Calvary they passed.
Often I strove to speak, but powerless fell
My words amid that yelling multitude.
Around Him marched the armèd Roman guard,
Their bright spears glittering in the morning light.
I could not reach His side, but followed close,
Just keeping Him in sight. A cry I heard,
And looking upward, on the housetop near,
I Jesus' mother saw, striving to gain
The roof's low edge, and hasten to her Son,
Still by her friends restrained. Their company
I joined, and brought her with me to the spot
Where we together watched the work of death,—
Close by the cross, yet powerless to sustain
The sufferer there, by our own grief o'erborne.
Upon the crowd a breathless silence fell,
When Jesus dying, with a loud, clear voice
Cried, "It is finished." Then the startled earth

Upheaved her mighty bosom, thunders rolled,
And midnight darkness overspread the sky,
While in the temple the rent veil disclosed
The Holy of Holies open to the gaze
Of crowds unblessed; no more the dwelling-place
Of our Jehovah! Will He e'er return
To bless a people by such guilt accursed?
When passed the darkness, we were all alone
Amidst the Roman guard, and knowing well
That He was dead, I of His mother thought,
And led her fainting from the dismal scene.
After, as Nicodemus told last night,
Joseph of Arimathæa urged his claim
With Pilate for the body, and prevailed.
They two, assisted by the Roman guard,
Bore the loved burden to the sepulchre
At eventide, with hurried funeral rites.
We, following in the distance, saw the place
Where now He lies, the day's hard conflict o'er,
In calm and peaceful rest. What now remains
For us but the sure hope of following soon!
When the day breaks we will our hearts relieve

By visiting the spot, more sacred now
Than all the earth beside.

THE MOTHER.

Susanna, come,
We will prepare our bands and perfumes sweet.
Soon will the morning dawn, the Sabbath hours
Are past, and duty calls to solemn work.
Has Mary Magdalene already gone?
Let us make haste to follow in her steps.

—o—

SCENE VIII.—A ROOM IN JERUSALEM IN THE HOUSE OF JOHN THE DISCIPLE.

MARY, *the Mother of Jesus;* FRIENDS *and* DISCIPLES.

SUSANNA.

The night is past, now shines the golden day,
And though the mists of morning dim the sun,

Soon will they disappear and leave the light
Cloudless and fair to gladden all the earth.
We weep no more for Jesus in the grave
Low sleeping; we have seen His empty tomb,
And know that He is risen from the dead.

JOHN.

How was it you found entrance to the tomb?
A heavy stone was rolled against the door;
You women could not move it. Was the guard
There when you reached the place?

THE MOTHER.

No one we saw.
The stone was rolled away, and entering straight
We saw the grave was vacant of its guest;
And while in wonder and in fear we stood,
Two shining forms to us appeared, and told
The Lord was risen. What more remains to tell!
It is enough to know this glorious truth.
For me, I am content to wait in hope,
Believing all is well. But this quick change

From deepest sorrow to a joy so great,
Has left me powerless longer to contend
Against this mortal weakness. I must rest;
Joanna to your questions can reply,
And I would be alone. My Son may come,
And our glad meeting must no eye behold.
He is the Christ! He is the Son of God!
No word has failed of all to me revealed.
I am His mother; oh, the heavenly joy
Of that sweet tie no human heart but mine
Can know. I had no equal in my grief,
I have no friend to share my gladness now.
Only to Jesus can my heart disclose
Its fulness of delight. He was my Son,
Is still my dear first-born; yet I no less
A sinful woman by His death redeemed.
In God my Saviour I will rejoice!

JOHN.

What can His mother hope for? We have seen
The grave, and found it vacant, like a bed
From which the sleeper in calm strength had risen;

But Him we saw not. Jesus was not there.
The grave-clothes which had Him enwrapped were laid
With careful hand aside, the napkin, bound
About His blood-stained brow, not with the rest,
But, neatly folded, placed upon the ledge
Whereon His head had rested. Hast thou brought
These relics home?

JOANNA.

Yes; by His mother claimed,
They in her keeping lie. None can dispute
Her sacred right to this last farewell gift,
By Jesus left behind when He arose.
She seems to think He still may be on earth.
I only hope to meet Him when I wake
From death's cold sleep to dwell with spirits blessed.
I must go home and tell the joyful news.
How is all nature changed since this fair morn!
The very air seems hushed in calm repose,
As if some great solemnity were near,
And, in the sunshine hid, the stars of heaven
Were listening for the hymns of earth's glad praise.

JOHN.

Peter, why art thou silent? Not one word
Of sorrow or regret has passed thy lips
All this sad time; yet written on thy brow
Is bitterest suffering and dark despair.
Such tears may help to ease a woman's heart,
They only dim the sight of eyes like thine.
Thou wert the bravest of our company;
The first to tell thy love and prove its strength.
We who with Jesus closest friends have been,
Have learned but little of His holy grace,—
Humble obedience and submissive spirit,—
To be so all unmanned even by His death.
Thinkest thou not it was His will to die,
That so His Father honoured more might be?
Rememb'rest thou the vision on the mount,
When Moses and Elias with Him talked,
And we looked wondering on? It was of death,
To be accomplished at Jerusalem,
They spoke, while solemn gladness thrilled each voice,
And on *His* face the living glory shone.
So will it now be shining as He sits

Beside His Father on the throne of Heaven.
Now risen from the darkness of the grave,
Although we see Him not, His eye can pierce
The clouds that part us, and know all our thoughts:
Why share not thine with other mourners now?

PETER.

None are like me, so boastful, so debased,
As let the fear of any form of death,
Or living torture work such coward deed
As to deny Him. John, you heard me not,
And shame has sealed my lips. Now I must speak,
Or my wild brain will turn. Yet will I lose
Thy love and trust for ever from this hour.
Knowest thou that following to the high-priest's house,
A maiden saw me crouching by the fire,
And named me as a fellow-countryman
And friend of Jesus. Tempted by some fiend,
I swore she lied; and thrice with word and oath
Denied the Lord. Then suddenly in the court
A cock crew, and my senses lost returned;
One look the Master gave as out I passed:

The sorrowful pleading of His loving eyes
Still haunts me. I have wept till tears no more
Will come; and anguish burns within my breast.
Oh, had I found a place to kiss His feet,
And tell my falseness, and His pardon seek!
Now He is gone, and self-reproach is vain!
Is there forgiveness for such guilt as this?
Tell me, ye both disclaim my fellowship;
One of the chosen three no more I stand
Worthy of honour in the Master's sight.

JAMES.

When none are worthy why should brothers blame?
I grieve for thee who bare this added weight
Of sin amidst thy sorrow; still for thee
Forgiveness waits in Jesus' heart of love.
No sinner ever asked from Him a boon
But it was granted; even on the cross,
One of the thieves, beside Him crucified,
Prayed that when Jesus to the kingdom came
He would remember him, and He replied,
"To-day in Paradise shalt thou be with Me."

Even in His pain, the work of blessing brought
A flush of joy into the Master's face,
As if some holy promise cheered His soul
Before He passed into the gathering cloud
Of the sixth hour's great darkness, then so near.
And I remembered how He once had said,
"If I be lifted up, I then will draw
All men to Me;" and this again He spoke,—
"No man can come to Me who is not drawn
Unto Me by the Father," following close
Like stringed pearls linked on memory's chain.
The prophet's words I plainly seemed to read,
"He of the travail of His soul shall see,
And shall be satisfied;" yet I in vain
Tried to connect the meaning of these things;
They only passed before me like a dream
Which men, in telling, cannot picture plain.
And yet this lesson may we from it learn,—
That by the death of Jesus men are drawn
Nearer the Father, nearer to the Son,
And in forgiveness lies Love's perfect work.

PETER.

But that poor thief had never known the Lord
As I had known Him, never by His side
In loving converse walked, and with glad heart
Drunk in the music of His heavenly words;
Nor felt His hand sustain amidst the waste
Of whirling waves on that tempestuous sea;
Nor in His love rejoiced; nor seen His works
Of power and glory. Darker far my sin
From all the brightness that had gone before.

JOHN.

Hast thou forgotten now how patiently
He bore with all our weakness, and restrained
Our harsher natures from ungentle deeds?
Still He remains the same; no word can fail
Of all that He has spoken. Pardon waits
On true repentance, meeting with glad arms
The sinner who returns. Sweet mercy waits,
Offering her blessings to the penitent.
Such gift may yet be thine, and added strength,
No more to sin as then.

PETER.

To sin as then!
If I could think that possible, my heart
Would break with anguish. Yet no strength of mine
Can save me. Jesus, keep me by Thy grace!

MARY MAGDALENE.

The Lord is risen! Wake, mourning hearts, and sing!
Jesus has burst the barriers of the grave!
Mine eyes have seen Him, and mine ears have heard
His gracious words; no more with sorrow crowned:
The marks left by the thorns upon his brow
Like halo of immortal beauty seem.
He is the Lord! I knew Him by His voice!
The same soft eyes of love, the same sweet smile,
But shining with a glory all Divine.
Peter, to thee a gracious word He sent:
He bade me tell them all, but thee He named.
Doubtless thy boldness in defence has won
For thee this honour; but for me, the least,
The most unworthy, what had I to gain
So great a boon, His own blessed voice to hear?

JOHN.

Where hast thou seen Him, Mary?

MARY MAGDALENE.

As I walked
In that fair garden by the sepulchre.
Long by the grave I wept to find Him gone,
And then He met me, and, in wonder lost,
I knew Him not until He spoke my name
In well-known accents. At His feet I fell,
The blessèd feet of my new-risen Lord.
I was the first to greet Him! I the first
To bear this message of celestial joy!
Where is His mother? I must go to her.

JOHN.

She in her chamber rests. Not vain her hope
That still on earth her eyes again might see
The Son she loved, and greet her risen Lord.

MARY MAGDALENE.

She may have seen Him, mother, sad no more,

Whose eyes have found such solace for their tears.
I passed Susanna in my eager haste
To bring the tidings here; she on her way
Towards the garden seemed. Jesus may wait
The joyful greetings of His loved ones there.

PETER.

O joy! I too may see Him! let us go.
Come, John, lest my faint heart should fail of words.

—o—

SCENE IX.—IN THE GARDEN OF LAZARUS, AT BETHANY.

MARY, *the Mother of Jesus;* FRIENDS AND DISCIPLES.

MARY OF BETHANY.

Let us with songs of joy the echoes wake!
Let every heart with gladness great rejoice!
For we have seen the golden gates of heaven
Open to let the Lord of Glory in;

And, looking after Him, we strive to reach
The strains of sinless hymns our joy to tell.
He hath ascended to His throne on high,
To take the crown the Father hath prepared.
Honour and love and glorious majesty
Attend His holy steps for evermore.
The angel hosts are crowding to His seat,
To welcome home their King to heaven again;
And saints are praising, all their voices tuned
To one full choir of hallelujahs sweet.
Shall we not join them, pouring at His feet
The tribute of our joy, so dearly bought
By all the sorrow of His passion's hour,
His death, and cruel deeds upon Him wrought
By sinful men, in Satan's day of power?
Thou hast been with us, Brother, Helper, Friend;
In loving clasp our hands have met with thine.
Our eyes have seen Thee, and our ears have heard
Thy human voice declare the truth divine,
And we have loved Thee with a trust more deep
Than any earthly friend could ever win.
But now Thou art with God, and we are here,

And cannot reach up to Thy glory's height ;
Thy living presence made our heart's delight.
We can but wait and watch till Thou appear,
Again, to cheer us with the blessèd sight.

MARY MAGDALENE.

Oh for another glimpse of Thy loved face,
My Lord, my Saviour ! That mine eyes might feast
On the glad smile of Thy forgiving love !
Thou to my darkness brought'st the light of peace,
Waking me from the night of guilt and sin,
To hail the day-spring from on high, which shone
Around Thy footsteps—Thou, the glorious Sun
Of righteousness, whose coming clothes the earth
With flowers of everlasting joy and peace,
Making the gloomy desert to arise
And blossom like a garden, blooming fair
In holy beauty 'neath Jehovah's eye.
Now is it only like the early dawn,
When the first songsters of the woods are heard
Warbling their greetings in soft melodies,
To woo the king of day his couch to leave.

Even so our songs arise to Thee, dear Lord,
To keep Thee mindful of Thy promise given
Of glad return; no more with grief to bend
Beneath the heavy burden of our sin—
But as a King, in glory bright to reign!
The floating clouds which veiled Thee from our sight
Are radiant yet with the celestial hues,
That through the open gates of heaven streamed
As Thou didst enter thine eternal home.
Ere yet the mists of earth can dim the sheen
On that fair path of light, for us return,
Or send Thy messengers to bid us come
Where we may be with Thee. We strive to sing,
And can but murmur feeble words, that turn
To sighs of longing for the present Lord.
When will He come again? Mother, thy face
Is now the happiest in its solemn calm
Of glad contentment. Canst thou bear to part
So with thy Son beloved, or told He thee
The time of His return?

THE MOTHER.

He named no time,
Nor did I ask Him. Treasured in my heart
Ever He dwells in spirit and in grace.
To see Him in the form of manhood robed,
Walking beside me, seems of small account,
Now that the glory of this day has crowned
All His life's travail with a joy so full,
Dispelling every doubt of faith and love,
And showing to His people all the power
Of His divinity. Again I raise
The song, beside His cradle often sung,
Now to a strain of sweeter music set:
My spirit in my Saviour shall rejoice;
In God I will be glad, and praise His name
For all His love to me so lowly, raised
To highest honour by His heavenly grace;
And for the mercy shown to David's house,
To Israel, and the guilty race of man.
All my desires this day I see fulfilled
When by my side my other children stand,
Among the friends of Jesus, sharing all

The blessings of His love ; none alien found,
But all rejoicing in His death-bought peace.
James, thou rememberest what I told thee once
Of Jesus' birth, and own Him as the Christ,
The Son of God most high.

JAMES.

None now can doubt,
Whose eyes have seen the Lord to heaven ascend ;
And yet to me this day's glad wonder brought
Not fuller trust than when upon the cross,
Scorned and reviled, He hung. His Godlike power
I oft had witnessed, and His claim to reign
As David's Son I had at last allowed ;
But in my vain ambition I desired
To see Him sitting on an earthly throne
Surrounded with the pomp of worldly state.
Even when I saw Him hanging on the cross,
To the last hour, I thought He would descend
In strength and power, so vanquishing His foes,
And walking on their necks assert His place ;
But when I marked the majesty of woe

Which sat upon His brow, bleeding and pale,
The silent dignity with which He heard
His works of power flung in His face with taunts,
And mocking words that blamed His impotence,
And heard His prayers for them so kindly breathed
By dying lips; the grandeur of His work
So nearly finished rose before my sight,
As if clear written on a scroll of fire.
This is the Son of God, I wondering said;
And all my soul was melted into love,
And pity, and adoring gratitude,
That found no words, till I had heard the news
That Christ was risen triumphant o'er the grave.
Then from the cross I turned, wishing full oft
That I had better known the Holy One
Who by my side to perfect manhood grew:
But since His resurrection many an hour
Of sweet communion with that brother passed,
Has served to tell Him all my faith and love,
And win forgiveness. Taught by Him, I see
The need of all His life, humble, obscure,
A man of toil among His fellow-men,

Bearing the burden of humanity
In very truth, that He might learn its needs;
And now in human form to heaven gone up,
That we might learn our right therein to dwell
As sons of God, who was His Father known
To Him, and by Him now to us revealed.
Oh how our thoughts aspire to pierce the clouds
Which have received our brother from our sight!
Speak, Lazarus; hast thou no news for us
Brought from that unseen land? When in the grave
Thy body silent lay, death could not bind
The spirit in its chains. What sawest thou
In that short visit to the realms of light?

MARY OF BETHANY.

He will not speak, nor answer will he give
To any question; he but sits and smiles,
Looking beyond us with soft dreamy eyes,
And quivering lips half-parted, and flushed cheeks,
As if an inward glory made them bright.
He is not changed—is still our brother, kind,

Thoughtful, and pleasant, and yet not the same.
His thoughts appear to touch the things of earth,
Just as a king might hold his childhood's toys
Before his infant's sight, a moment won
By the child's gladness from the deeper joy
That crowned his manhood in his people's good.
Look how he sits in contemplation wrapt,
Watching the sunset clouds, which yet retain
The rosy shadows of the angels' robes.
I think he sees beyond them. Wake him not
Till Martha tell us of the wondrous trance
That fell upon him on that night of woe
When Jesus was betrayed, and only passed
When John surprised us with the startling news
That He had risen from the sepulchre,
And laid aside the garments of the grave.
Mother, I have not seen thee since that time!
Didst thou not wonder that we never came
To offer sympathy in those dark days
Of sorrow while He slept?

THE MOTHER.

I knew it not—
For then my mind had lost the power of thought.
When from the cross I turned, I never knew
Where I was led, or who beside me walked,
Nor night nor day, nor face of any friend,
Nor if they spoke to me, or smiled, or wept,
Nor that I answered or in silence sat.
The life I lived was all one dreary blank,
Till on the Sabbath, waking from a dream,
The voice of John I heard, and dimly knew.
And then Susanna called on me to eat,
For in the morning there was work to do,
Carrying the spices to the sepulchre;
And then we went, and saw the angels first,
And my heart leapt for joy before they spoke;
The well remembered brightness of their looks
Recalling words of gladness heard before.
Although at first their heavenly message fell
On ears so startled that the sound alone
We heard, nor its glad meaning understood;
But soon to us the risen Saviour came;

We saw Him, and our hearts were sad no more.
Now am I among women blessed indeed
Who in my Son the great Messiah see,
And knowing that He dwells the Son of God
In everlasting glory, can look back
To the sweet memories of His human life,
And own Him as my child the Son of Man.
That name He loved, claiming relationship
With all His people through His mother's right
To the high honour God on her conferred
That she should call Him son. But of thy brother,
What had befallen him?

MARTHA.

Just on the night
That Jesus was betrayed, when watching late
For His appearing, suddenly the hand
Of sleep on Lazarus fell. Low drooped his head
And lying on the couch, his folded hands,
Closed eyes, and parted lips, and brow so pale,
Looked in the lamp's white rays so like the day
When life departed, that in haste we strove

To rouse him, and found all our efforts vain.
And thus he lay, breathing in slumber deep
All those four days, till John and Peter came
To tell us Christ was risen; then he awoke,
And, smiling, asked for food, nor wonder showed,
Only a glad contentment when our joy
Was brimming o'er in songs and words of praise.
And when we ceased not questioning, to hear
The joyful news repeated to confirm
Our feeble faith, Lazarus looked round on us
With eyes that chid our troubled doubts, and said:
"Is He not Christ the Lord, the Son of God?"
And ever since that hour, with reverence deep
And prayers devout and fervent, does he call
On Jesus, speaking to Him as before
When He our guest beside him listening sat.
At first we greatly feared that Lazarus, too,
Would by the angry council be condemned,
For still the crowds would come to see the man
From death returned; but now their sinful rage
Has died away, or they may fear to tempt
The people further by their cruel deeds:
So Lazarus is left free.

MARY OF BETHANY.

Yet might he choose,
I almost think, he now would gladly die,
And go to Jesus.

LAZARUS.

What sayest thou, Mary?
To die and go to Jesus! Is it death
That only brings us to His presénce now?
Is He not always here, our Lord and God?
What does it matter if the dress we wear
Be mortal dust or spiritual essence pure?
Each in His sight is good; He hath worn both;
And knowing how the human garments clog
The spirit's flight, is patient with our weakness.
Knowest thou what death is that my choice decides?
Sister,—it is the greatest of all ills,
The foe most terrible to man opposed,
Who would have conquered all of Adam's race,
And held them bound in chains for evermore,
Had Christ not come to free us. 'Tis the child
Of sin, the weapon left in Satan's hands,

Whose stroke the power of God alone can heal.
To die! That is not to put off the garb
Which God has wrought for us, to lay aside
The day's worn garments for the night's repose,
And waking in the roseate light of dawn
To find beside our bed a kingly robe,
Shining and fair, adorned with broideries rich
Of pearl and gem, a crown and diadem,
And our low nature, grown to royal height
Of wisdom, honour, love, and purity.
I have no wish to leave this earthly home,
No choice of dwelling-place; if here or there,
God knoweth best, and He shall choose for me.

JOHN.

Much hast thou learned from others closely hid;
But when to us the promised Spirit comes,
Recalling Jesu's words, then may we learn
The secrets of the grave, and all beyond;
So may we order all our life on earth,
As ever walking in the Master's sight.
We know that He is risen, and rejoice.

Our eyes have seen Him pass above the veil
Of earthly clouds into the light of heaven;
Yet, with us still the grave-clothes left behind,
The memory of the cross, the sepulchre,—
Though empty,—seem to bind Him to the place
His bodily presence filled, and faith desires
With eager longings His return to earth,
To take His power and reign our living King,
As He has promised.

PETER.

But He left us work
To do for Him, and prove our faith and love
By telling to the world the tidings glad
Of His salvation come. I count the hours,
Waiting with earnest hope to hear the voice
That bids our silence end, and gives us leave
To raise the glorious standard of the cross,
And preach the Lord of Life to sinful men.

JAMES, THE LORD'S BROTHER.

Begins your mission at Jerusalem?

So I have heard, then onward through the land
Of Palestine. How far then spreads your march?

PETER.

Through the whole earth to its remotest isles,
Wherever sorrow hides, or sin or death
Destroy the fair creation with their blight,—
There we must go to tell of Jesu's love,
And power, and will to save. Soon shall we win
The world to Him, and hail Him King of all.
Then will our joy be full.

JAMES, THE LORD'S BROTHER.

Mother, with me
Return to Nazareth a little while,
And see thy kinsfolk, and from them receive
The kindly words they keep in store for thee.
I, and Salome, must our journey take
To-morrow with the other friends who came,
Called by the Lord, that we might here receive
His farewell blessing, His ascension see,
And of His death and glory witness bear.

Now He has gone to heaven, thou art alone:
Wilt thou go with us to thy quiet home?
No more a place of grief.

JOHN.

That trust is mine,
Her home with me. From Jesus I received
This sacred gift. Mother, you are content
To share my humble dwelling in the city;
You will not weary for the sunny hills,
And flowery vales and plains of Galilee?

THE MOTHER.

No; all my heart is in a fairer land,
Whose beauty ne'er grows dim; nor cloud, nor storm,
Nor any winter, blights its flowery bloom.
With Christ in God my life is hidden now,
And all the past seems like a finished tale,
Whose saddest page we treasure, yet no more
Open the book to read the words again.
In Nazareth these last three troubled years,
I tasted all the honeyed sweets of hope,

So often followed by the bitter fruit
Of disappointment, when by those I loved
Jesus with cold disdain was driven away.
I could not understand His sacred work,
But for His honour all my soul was moved,
And every scornful taunt sank in my heart,
Vexing my timid spirit till I pined
With fretful murmurings for His glory's day;
And I, who might have cheered Him, caused Him grief.
Now all is well with me, the secret sin
Of my poor vain ambition for His reign
As a great earthly king, forgiven all.
God knows our frame, remembers we are dust,
And as a father pities children dear,
So does He look upon us in His love;
But human weakness cannot soon forget
The pain of bitter sorrow and despite;
The very words of scorn ring in the ear,
Spoken by voices whose familiar tones
Before made sweetest music in our homes,
Long after change has wrought its healing work,

And love forgiven the error that did wound.
Our imperfection keepeth count of wrong
In spite of all our striving, and this pain
Might press too hard upon me in those scenes.
Here I shall hold the past a pleasant dream,
Only by shadows crossed.

SALOME.

But there you watched
The infant Jesus in His beauty's bloom ;
The hills are there where His young footsteps trode
Where in His holy manhood oft He mused.
Will it not cheer thee o'er these paths to stray,
Made by His memory fairer than of old?
O mother, come, forgive us all the wrong
Of those harsh words ; it must be from our eyes
Some wicked spirit hid the holy truth,
Or we had never so misunderstood
The sinless heavenly beauty of the Christ
So long desired,—rejected when He came.
He has forgiven us. Mother, be thou kind;
Forget thine anger ; be thou as of old,

Our dearest, truest friend and counsellor,
Dwelling among us honoured and beloved.
We will surround thee with all tenderness,
With reverence, fond affection, deeds of love;
To all thy need our hands shall minister,
And thou shalt nurse our children on thy knee,
And tell them of the joy by Jesus wrought,
Turning their hearts to pure and holy faith.
So shall thy life's fair evening cloudless pass,
Until the starry night calls thee to rest.

THE MOTHER.

My child, I have no anger, not one thought
For thee and thine, but love; of thy desire
And warm affection, I with grateful heart
The expression hear; yet is there in my past,
Much that no earthly love can ever heal.
Thy home is filled with blessings, guard them well;
Teach thou thy children early to restrain
Their selfish passions and ungentle words,
That no distrust or pride may break the bond
Of family love. I ever in my prayers

Remember all my children, yet no more
Can I among them dwell. Jesus for me
More wisely chose, knowing my timid heart,
My spirit's weakness, ever prone to feed
Its sadness with the past, when He, with John,
Arranged for me a home,—not needed long.
I feel the evening of my life declines,
And the sweet night of peace and rest is near;
I know that Jesus will not leave me here
To faint beneath the weariness of earth;
I am not sad now, all my thoughts are tuned
To pleasant undertones of hope and joy;
Only my work seems o'er, and I would sleep.
This mortal form is weak, and the deep woe
Of those four days has shaken all my strength;
The sword that pierced His side struck through my heart.
That wound is bleeding still. Often I start,
Surprised by sudden pain, and press my hand
Upon my breast to check the rising moan.
What mother could have borne to see her son,
So dearly loved, die such a dreadful death?

Knowing Him more than mortal lessened not
The sweet affection of fond nature's tie.
He named me Mother hanging on the cross—
Could I forget the sufferer was my child?
Now I have learned the lesson of His death
From His own lips, and know that only thus
Could man be ransomed from the power of sin,
In God I do rejoice, and praise His Name,
Who gave His Son beloved for us to die.
By Him redeemed I with His people wait,
To see in Christ salvation free proclaimed,
And Israel to Jehovah's love restored.
Here will I stay: dearer to me the scenes
Where last He walked than any spot on earth;
And here among His friends, chosen and proved,
I will be safe from any scornful words.
I could not bear them now. Then when mine eyes
Are closed in death, I hope to be laid down
To that sweet sleep in Jesus' empty grave.
This is the only honour I have claimed
As Mother of the Christ, and to my wish
Joseph of Arimathea gives consent,

Granting to me the garden sepulchre.
From it I shall arise when at the sound
Of the last trumpet angels gather home
The saints of God, in mansions bright to dwell,
By Jesus now preparing for His own ;
And at the marriage supper of the Lamb,
His mother shall be found among the guests,
Arrayed in garments purchased by her Son,
Rejoicing in the Heavenly Bridegroom's joy
With songs that mingle, in sweet harmony,
The cradle hymn of Jesus with the notes
Of praise which tell the gladness of a world
Ransomed from sin and sorrow by His love.

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